

A HISTORY OF
THE
VINTNERS'
COMPANY



ANNE CRAWFORD

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The Lord Mayor's Water Procession on the Thames showing the Companies' barges, 1683.

By an unknown painter, probably Dutch.

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ANNE CRAWFORD

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Anne Crawford
Bristol
1974-1976

Foreword

by Sir Anthony Wagner, K.C.V.O., D.Litt., Garter King of Arms

It was during my Mastership of the Vintners' Company in 1973-4 that the proposal for a History of the Company was approved and I am sure that this volume will confirm the Court's wisdom in asking Miss Crawford to undertake the task. I have myself found that it answers in a fascinating way many questions about the Company's history which had long been in my mind, as well as others which I had not even thought of. The work fittingly crowns the preceding years of effort which the Company and its Archivist, Mrs. Glover, put into arranging, calendaring and indexing our archives, for without that preceding work this History could not have been written.

I doubt if any human institution can be thoroughly understood without an understanding of its history, but especially is this true of those ancient institutions in which our country is rich, such as the Livery Companies of the City of London. For some of these the story is complicated by the disappearance or decline of ancient original trades and the rising up in their place of new activities. Our Company is fortunate in the persistence of its original purpose in full unabated vigour. Nevertheless, the circumstances in which this purpose has been pursued through the centuries have changed often and greatly, so that the Company's powers of adaptation have been tried again and again, as this History shows.

It only remains for me, on the Company's behalf, to thank Miss Crawford for her labours and to congratulate her on her achievement.

Chapter I



The Medieval Wine Trade and the Origins of the Company

I

The Vintners' Company received its charter of incorporation from Henry VI in 1437, but ironically enough, it had by that date passed its zenith, both in its dominance of the wine trade and in the influence of its members on the affairs of the city of London. The Company's position as the eleventh member of the twelve great Livery Companies was fixed in 1516; if it had been fixed a little over two centuries earlier, it would have been third or fourth. As a chronicle of its own affairs, the Company's records do not begin until the early sixteenth century, so that the part of its history which is, in some ways, the most important has to be pieced together from other sources, chiefly the records of the city of London, in whose early history it played a prominent part.

The origins of the company, like those of the other misteries, are obscure. Most of them seem to have crystallised round one or more religious fraternities, usually focussed on a church. These social and religious brotherhoods existed before the Norman Conquest, and since men practising the same trade or craft tended to live in the same area and thus often belonged to the same fraternity, the old religious association often took on an economic colouring.¹ Sometimes motives may have been primarily economic from the start, but in most cases, social, religious and economic motives were all mixed. Much time and effort have been expended by historians in trying to trace the origins of companies in these fraternities, but without much success, and all that can be said in the case of the Vintners is that their early association was based on the church of St. Martin in the Vintry, which was south of Guildhall and close to the river, and to a lesser extent on its neighbour, St. James Garlickhithe. Queenhithe and Garlickhithe were the two landing places on the Thames where, according to early records, wine ships were permitted

to discharge their cargoes, and there are slightly later references to the wine wharf at St. Martin's. The area round Vintners' Hall was an important Roman site, and given the force of custom, it is quite possible that this was the place where the Roman wine ships discharged their cargoes.² This, therefore, was the locality where men engaged in the wine trade tended to congregate and where their early associations were formed.

The two great English trades of the Middle Ages were the wool and cloth trade and the wine trade, one dominating the export market, the other the import market. The Romans were responsible for the spread of vineyards and the wine trade to northern Europe, and although the British as a race drank their native mead or ale, their chieftains and other Romanised Britons prized wine for its prestige and its alcoholic qualities. Thus it became a drink for the wealthier classes of society and this remained so in the centuries that followed. The nobility, the gentry and the higher reaches of the church and the bourgeoisie bought it wholesale and in considerable quantities, while the poorer classes drank it when they could afford it, a drink at a time, in places where it was sold retail. These customs had a direct effect on the composition of the Vintners' Association, which fell into two distinct classes, the merchant vintners, who imported the wine and sold it wholesale, and the taverners, who sold it retail. The habit of wine-drinking might have disappeared in England after the departure of the Romans if it had not been for its religious association. Its use for the Christian mass gave it a new importance and made it a necessity in all Christian countries. Missionaries took it with them wherever they travelled. Because of this, vineyards were not uncommon in early medieval England, according to the Venerable Bede, and many were planted by religious institutions. Thirty-eight are specifically mentioned in the Domesday Book. The Norman Conquest brought an increased consumption in wine. The king and many of his nobles had vineyards on their French estates from whence they brought wine to England. The French centre for the export of wine to England was Rouen, the chief city in Normandy, and the wine came from the Île de France, parts of Burgundy and perhaps the Loire valley.³ Thus in the early Middle Ages, the demand for wine was met partly from homegrown produce, partly from the estates in northern France and partly from commercially imported wine.

The wine trade, throughout its history, has been more affected by a host of regulations than most other trades. Later Saxon kings were already issuing regulations for the sale of wine brought into the country by

foreign merchants. For instance, Ethelred II (979–1016) fixed tolls to be paid in London ‘by the men of Rouen who come with wine’; this, with later confirmation of their privileges in the port of London, suggests that Rouen merchants dominated the import of wine in the late Saxon and early Norman periods.⁴ The reign of Henry II, however, saw far-reaching changes in the pattern of the wine trade. In 1152 his marriage to Eleanor of Aquitaine opened up the whole of her duchy as a source of wine for the English trade, and wine ships sailed from the ports of all the wine-producing areas of western France, but chiefly from Bordeaux. The loss of Normandy by the English Crown in 1203 diminished the trade with Rouen and the loss of La Rochelle in 1224 set the seal on the pre-eminence of Bordeaux wines. The transitional period is illustrated by King John’s supplies of wine in 1212. In that year he received eighty-six tuns as prisage (see below), and bought 262 tuns at a cost of £507.11s. Of this total, fifty-four tuns came from the Orleannais and the Île de France, and 267 tuns from Gascony (or Aquitaine). Four tuns came from Germany. By this time London was already the largest English port for the import of wine, though a good deal came to Bristol and Sandwich and the royal storage depot for wine was at Southampton.⁵ The German wine came mostly from the Moselle region and other parts of the Rhineland and the trade was largely controlled by men from Lorraine.

Some regulations for the Lorraine wine fleet, dating from the reign of Henry II (1154–1189), show something of the level of organisation reached in the port of London. The fleet came up the Thames to the New Weir, the eastern limit of the city’s jurisdiction, and then, in conformity with the city’s regulations, the ships had to put themselves in line and raise their ensigns until London Bridge was reached. There they had to moor off the wharf, probably Queenhithe, for two ebbs and one flood tide without disposing of any of their cargo. During that period, one of the sheriffs and the king’s chamberlain came on board and selected what they wanted for the royal use. The king had the right of prisage, which entitled him to a tun of wine from before the mast and a tun from after the mast from each ship carrying more than twenty-one tuns and to a single tun from ships carrying less. He could also exercise the right of purchasing any incoming wines at a favourable price if he wanted it for his own use or for that of his armies. The price was fixed by ‘lawful merchants of London’, and credit was given for a fortnight. When the required number of tides had passed, the ships were allowed to lie alongside the wharf and dispose of their cargo to London merchants.⁶ This

reference to 'lawful merchants of London' is one of the earliest indications of a group of men primarily engaged in the wine trade acting in concert for the regulation of the trade.

When an Englishman of the thirteenth or fourteenth centuries talked of wine, it was Gascon wine that he meant. With the establishment of the Angevin Empire, England became so sure of her supplies from this source that attempts to grow her own wine were abandoned from the late twelfth century, and wine bought from other areas was a very small percentage of the whole. The trade had a very strong influence on Gascony too, where more and more land was devoted to viticulture and almost all Gascons, from the Archbishop of Bordeaux downwards, were involved in the wine trade. The country's need for grain and dairy-produce had therefore to be supplied by England and the interdependence of the two countries was virtually complete. The importance of the wine trade to medieval England's economy should not be overlooked; for instance, in 1446-1448, an average of three million gallons per annum were imported, worth £46,000, nearly one-third of England's entire import trade. Of this, Gascon wine made up about 85-90 per cent. When Gascony was finally lost by the English in 1453, the French Crown attempted to put an end to the trade, but found it was vital to Gascony's prosperity. No other major importer could be found to replace England and the Crown was thus forced to allow the trade to continue.

At the end of the thirteenth century the trade was at its height. Imports averaged about 20,000 tuns a year and at least two-thirds of it was bought in England from Gascon importers, who not only shipped the wine to England but travelled up and down the country selling it.⁷ In the early years of the trade, it was fairly evenly balanced between Gascon and English importers and there is no doubt that a number of Londoners built up substantial fortunes by means of it. Edward I altered this balance in favour of his Gascon subjects. As early as 1280, he extended the period in which Gascons, alone among foreigners, were permitted to stay in England from forty days to three months. It was his great charter of 1302 which weighted the balance firmly in favour of his Gascon subjects. By the charter, in return for a custom of 2s. per tun of imported wine, the Gascons were exempted from all other financial exactions, including the royal right of prise. As the price of wine rose steeply in the course of the fourteenth century, the royal prise began to bear more heavily on the native English importers. The charter also gave permanent protection to all Gascon vintners; it allowed them to live where they liked instead of

with a denizen (or native) host and to sell their wine wholesale to whom they pleased. All these provisions were contrary to the laws of the city of London governing foreign traders.⁸

By the early fourteenth century, the Gascon wine-merchants in England, under these special privileges granted them by Edward I, had formed themselves into a sort of confederation, partly to regulate their trade and partly, it seems likely, for greater security in the face of the hostility they encountered from their London rivals. They were commonly known as the Merchant Wine-Tonniers of Gascony, but appear not to have been a company in the formal sense of the word. Their agreements were private ones, covering the collection of money due to merchants who had already returned to Gascony, the obtaining of privileges from the king's council, or the renewal of those already obtained on the accession of a new king.⁹ Englishmen who sought to undermine these privileges were penalised. In 1309 the king ordered the arrest of seventeen offenders in the city of London, among whom vintners were prominent, on account of injuries they had done Gascons. In 1310 the mayor was fined £10 and each aldermen £5 for their ill-treatment of Gascons.¹⁰ It cannot be supposed that the London merchants accepted the extra privileges granted to the Gascons without a struggle to curtail them, while the Gascons, when threatened, had recourse to the king. There had been trouble between the two groups even before the king issued the 1302 charter. In June 1300 Edward had sent a writ to the mayor and sheriffs concerning alleged restrictions London was placing on the merchants of Bordeaux as to their residence in the city and illegal exactions of 2d. on every cask of wine by way of pontage. This was a tax levied by the city authorities on every cask of wine passing under London Bridge and the revenue was used for the repair and upkeep of the bridge. The city returned the sharp reply that when the citizens of London enjoyed their full rights, as they did then by confirmation of the king, neither the Bordeaux merchants nor any other foreigners were permitted to hire hostels in which to live, but they were permitted to hire cellars and other storehouses for their goods for a fixed length of time. The king sent again to ask if the Bordeaux merchants were allowed to live on the premises with their goods, and if so, for how long. The city's answer to that was that all foreigners, including Bordeaux merchants, had to reside in the house of a freeman of the city and only for 40 days, during which time they had to sell their goods. They went on to add that only freemen were permitted to sell by retail. This was a right jealously guarded by the city, which in the early days of

their privileged position under Edward, the Gascons had attempted to enjoy as well.¹¹

Most of the Gascon vintners were only seasonal visitors, but some had permanent dwellings in London and enjoyed the liberties of the city. If a merchant was a citizen of both London and Bordeaux, then he was in a very privileged position indeed. As a citizen of the latter port, he could export his wine free of the customs which English merchants had to pay, while by virtue of his London citizenship he evaded the new custom on wine he should have paid as an alien. He then had recourse to Edward I's charter, by which as a Gascon, he was exempt from tallages (municipal taxes) paid by London citizens. In 1304, twenty-four prominent Gascon vintners living in Vintry Ward were exempt from that year's tallage. It is therefore little wonder that there was an increasingly angry feeling against those Gascons who had the privileges but not the responsibilities of the city. This, however, only applied to a relatively small number of Gascons, and most of their countrymen came at the beginning of the vintage season for a few weeks only. By that time the previous year's wines had either all been consumed or become undrinkable and the arrival of the first few ships from Bordeaux was followed by some very brisk business and high prices for the first week or two. It was obviously the aim of every merchant vintner, English or Gascon, to have a share in this market. The Gascons continually complained that their wines were sealed up for inspection for eight to fifteen days, while that of the English merchants was released much sooner. The inspection was done by a royal official known as a gauger, who checked to see that all the wine was of the type and quality it claimed to be. The Gascons got their own back for this piece of chicanery by refusing to acknowledge price restrictions and since they had such a large share of the market they were able to force prices up; in 1315 they even threatened to boycott the English market altogether.

On his seasonal visit, a Gascon's first concern was to hire himself a cellar or warehouse in which to display his wines for sale. Those Gascons who had permanent dwelling, as well as the greater London merchants, all had their own cellars, but the visiting Gascons had to compete for them with the smaller London dealers, preferably for ones in the Vintry close to the wine wharves where the ships docked. In 1299 the Gascons complained to Edward I because they could not find sufficient houses or cellars to hire, presumably due to obstruction on behalf of their native rivals quite as much as to the genuine lack of accommodation. The

king's writ to the city authorities in reply led to an outburst of building which resulted, according to the Elizabethan antiquary, John Stow, in 'many faire and large houses with vaults and cellers for stowage of wines and lodging of the Burdeaux marchants have been builded in place, where beforetime were cooks' houses . . . upon the riverside, betweene the wine in ships and the wine to be sold in taverns, was a common cookerie or Cookes' row.'¹²

When Edward I died in 1307, the Londoners seized the opportunity to claim that the Gascons' charter had lapsed with his death. In return for a subsidy, Edward II listened to the complaints of the Gascons and renewed it, but its terms were no longer respected and the quarrel between the Gascons and their London rivals continued. In 1327 the London vintners obtained an exemption from the royal right of prise and from that time took an increasing share of the trade.

At the beginning of the fourteenth century the English were not lading more than a quarter of the ships carrying wine from Gascony. By the end of the 1330s, London vintners were importing as much as the Gascons, and English merchants as a whole, twice as much. Although the Bordeaux merchants took a major part in the handling and sale of their wines, they rarely owned ships. Even at the height of their activity in the English market this was so. Between January 1303 and August 1304, 982 ships sailed from Bordeaux laden with wine, but only six of them belonged to that city. Of the rest 40 per cent were English, 22 per cent Breton, 10 per cent Norman, and 9 per cent came from the neighbouring town of Bayonne. As time went on English ships increased in proportion and towards the end of the fourteenth century England had acquired almost a monopoly in the wine-importing trade and about three quarters of the wine-carrying trade.¹³

The wine fleets sailed twice a year, in the late autumn with the vintage wines and after Candlemas (2 February) with the more mature 'reek' wines, which had been strained off the lees. Much of the vintage was sold off for Christmas, while the reek wines were usually disposed of by the end of April, after which the quality and prices deteriorated. The preliminary transactions behind the voyages involved buying goods in widely separate markets to be exchanged for wine in Gascony, the forming of partnerships to share risks and profits, and the fitting out of ships. Because Bordeaux and its hinterland were almost exclusively devoted to the vine and produced few foodstuffs or manufactured goods, the range of merchandise with a ready sale there was enormous. London

vintners might buy tin from Cornwall, herrings from Ipswich and grain from anywhere they could find it, to ship to Bordeaux. The importance of supplying Gascony with grain without depleting the home market led English merchants to purchase it as far afield as Prussia, and in this way the Baltic trade was opened up. The greatest commodity for export, however, was English cloth.

Many vintners had their own ships, reaping additional profits from wine freighted for other merchants. The smaller traders took their own ships over and did their own buying, the greater vintners entrusted their affairs to reliable employees. Medieval ships naturally varied greatly in size, but in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries, ships of about 1,000 tons burthen were by no means unusual, while from the mid-fifteenth century there was a universal decline in size throughout Europe until few were more than 200 tons and the majority between 100 and 150 tons. The popularity of small ships is not hard to explain since they needed only a small crew, were quick and easy to load and could enter almost any harbour, however poor, and finally, if sunk, the financial loss was easier to bear.¹⁴ Shipping obviously involved considerable capital outlay. The voyages, too, took a long time since the ships, with no navigational aids except the stars, hugged the shore and called in at ports fairly frequently for supplies. A normal voyage from London, for instance, might involve calls at Sandwich, Southampton, Conquet in Brittany, and Bordeaux. It is for this reason that vintners are frequently found trafficking in other commodities, just as other merchants whose main interest might be in cloth or fish are also found dealing in wine. The Anglo-French wars of the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries took a heavy toll of English shipping, not only in ships captured or sunk, but in those commandeered by the Crown for transport for its armies or for Channel-keeping duties, because it had very few ships of its own. Thus English shipping declined and the vintners lost not only valuable assets in the ships themselves, but also incurred increasingly heavy freight charges. By the mid-fifteenth century almost all the carrying trade had passed into the hands of aliens who continued to dominate it until the very end of the century. The lack of English ships is well illustrated. For instance, in 1468, David Selly, a London vintner, was accused of contravening a statute of 1382 which laid down that wines should be shipped in English ships only. The previous April he had landed his own wines and those of other merchants in a ship of Zeeland and his defence was that when he was in Bordeaux he could find no English ship available.¹⁵

The city of London records contain many cases of disputes over sales of wine. In 1305, Bernard de la Rochelle (whose name clearly gives his origins, but who must have been a London citizen) was attached to answer Arnold de Teler of Gascony in a plea of trespass. Arnold complained that Bernard had bought from him five casks of wine for £10 in London, taking him to a tavern and paying him 20s. on account. While they were sitting there, he said, Bernard had had the casks loaded and taken away. Bernard defended himself by saying that he had acted merely as a broker on behalf of Adam le Brocher and the latter had given him the 20s. for the advance payment and Arnold had himself made delivery to Adam. A jury from Vintry Ward found that the plaintiff had indeed delivered the wine to Adam and not to Bernard, and it was judged that Arnold gain nothing from his complaint and that Bernard be acquitted. These glimpses into court cases show nothing of the personalities and motives involved, and in this case there is apparently no reason to explain why Arnold brought the action, since on the face of it there seems to be no case at all. This is not, however, true of another legal action in the same year. Richard de Mauncestre and Peter le Taverner charged Peter Bolom that they had bought twelve casks of wine from him for £24, paying him £6 down and security for the remainder. At the time of purchase the wine was so dense and impure that it was unrecognisable by sight and taste, but the defendant had promised them that it was 'of good proof and short assize and would draw well in the end', so the plaintiffs agreed to let him keep it for a week. At the end of that time, they met in London and the defendant promised them that the wine was good and that he would indemnify them if it was not. The plaintiffs took the wine and kept it for a fortnight and found it so corrupt that they asked for their indemnity and were refused. The defendant admitted the sale but claimed the plaintiffs had not paid the remaining £18 as agreed at the time of purchase and that he had sued for it. The plaintiffs said the wine was other than he claimed and sought release from payment. In the sheriffs' court the verdict was given against the plaintiffs and they had to pay the defendant his £18. Having lost the suit for debt, Richard and Peter immediately sued for a remedy for the bad wine and this time they won their case.¹⁶

The merchant vintner himself played a very personal role in the wine trade. Most of them travelled to Bordeaux once or twice a year to buy wine, often leaving a factor or partner there to complete the business. At home each relied on apprentices to carry out lesser tasks, increasing their responsibilities as their seven-year apprenticeship grew to a close, and

sometimes appointing them as attorneys to act on his behalf. This did not always turn out well for the apprentices involved. In 1389, John Costace, a Gascon merchant, charged John Forteneye, apprentice to John Mocking, a London vintner, for the sum of £57.18s.4d. due for ten casks of Gascon wine bought by the defendant at Sandwich in November 1388. The money should have been paid when the casks were landed on the quay of the late Henry Picard in St. Martin in the Vintry, London, but although the wine was landed and gauged, the defendant refused to pay for it or accept delivery. The defendant admitted the agreement but said that the plaintiff was not prepared to deliver the casks as agreed. The jury, which by law had to be composed half of Gascons because one of their countrymen was involved, defaulted and the case turned over to the arbitration of four members of the Vintners' Mistery. They found for the plaintiff and the apprentice was sent to prison until he could pay for the wine, after which it would be delivered to him. Undaunted John Forteneye immediately brought a bill against his master, claiming that the latter had sent him to Sandwich to buy the wine, approved the bargain on his return and even assigned part of the wine to John Doget, another vintner. When the wine arrived in London, delivery of it was delayed because the sheriff arrested the wine for some time, and afterwards the master refused to accept it. The case was examined in the light of the law merchant and the court decided that the apprentice had bought the wine for his master's use and profit and the latter was bound to take responsibility and pay Costace his money. John Forteneye was therefore released from prison and his master committed in his place until the money was paid.¹⁷ Although disputes between vintners and their apprentices and servants were not uncommon, provided all went well the apprentice could aspire to the freedom of the city and an honourable place in the Mistery of the Vintners. The prospects were attractive and recruits came from a wide area, including Bordeaux. The scale of enterprise remained modest in comparison with some of the great European business houses, and the wine trade in England continued in the hands of individual vintners, although in each case the business involved others and was never purely a one-man concern.

II

Although at no particular time can it be said that the Mistery of the Vintners in London came into being, it is clear that they were an organised and influential body by the early thirteenth century. The rise to importance of the wine dealers can probably be seen as beginning with the acquisition of Aquitaine in 1152, and many of the early vintners to reach a prominent position in the city were French subjects of the king, or at least of French parentage. Among the city patricians at the end of the twelfth and beginning of the thirteenth centuries, the trades followed by most of the aldermanic body were the two great English trades, wine and wool. For every one alderman who was a goldsmith, a mercer or a pepperer (the other patrician trades), two were drapers or vintners. Already these five fraternities were organised and exclusive. For example, by 1257, the vintners' election of two wardens to supervise the trade had become a tradition. None of these guilds ever followed the common mistery pattern of making a supplication to the aldermanic council for ratification of their ordinances and the legal power to enforce a monopoly. They *were* that council. They were fully articulated misteries from their first appearances in the records. Not until the mid-thirteenth century did the first fishmonger and the first skinner gain aldermanic office, and before that it was the wine trade which dominated all others, even the wool and cloth trades which were to be the basis of England's prosperity. Dr. Williams has calculated that in the period 1215-1263, at least twenty-nine aldermen of all misteries were engaged in it, and formed easily the strongest pressure group on the aldermanic council. Fourteen aldermen were engaged in the cloth trade and eleven in that of wool. Spices and victuals claimed five aldermen each. At least one third of the body of aldermen were committed to the wine trade and these are only those whose names occur in the royal records. The real total must have been higher still. The early civic aristocracy of London was indeed 'a patriciate of vintners'.¹⁸ It is perhaps symbolic that the mayor who represented London at the sealing of Magna Carta in 1215, which confirmed all the city's liberties and free customs, was William Hardel, a member of a dynasty of vintners. He was the only non-baronial representative to serve on the committee of Twenty-Five, appointed to enforce the charter.

One of the earliest formal recognitions of the Vintners' Mistery came in 1283, when Edward I granted to Henry de Kingstone 'our common key

[quay] in the parish of St. Botolph, next Billingsgate', for the use of the mistery. They were to pay him a silver penny annually as an acknowledgement on the feast of St. John the Baptist. Although there are constant references to vintners' control of the wine trade and their influence in city affairs throughout the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries it was not until 1364 that they received their first charter. On 15 July 1364 Edward III granted a monopoly to buy and sell wine from Gascony to those enfranchised in the Mistery of Vintry in London (with a saving clause for those engaged in the trade in other cities and boroughs). This did not mean that vintners could not buy and sell any other type of wine, but only that any man trading in Gascon wine had to be a vintner. The vintners were to trade at reasonable prices and for reasonable profits. Foreigners were only permitted to sell their wine wholesale and they were not allowed to take their wines outside the realm again once they had brought it in. The Vintners' Mistery was to elect four of the most 'sufficient, loyal and knowledgeable' members who did not keep taverns and present them to the mayor and sheriffs of London to be sworn to survey all the Gascon wine in the city. They were to see that retail prices were reasonable for the various wines and that each type was known and named. The taverners selling wine retail were to be governed by these four searchers, who had the power to correct faults in the exercise of the monopoly and punish defaulters. To prevent money going out of the country, the king gave permission for English merchant vintners to buy cloths to sell in Gascony and for Gascon vintners to buy herring and cloth to take home, provided that they did not attempt to sell them in England; nor were the Gascons to sell wine retail. All the wines coming to London were to be landed on the west side of London Bridge and in the Vintry, and the king's butler, gauger and searchers were to know where it was all stored and to take custom and excise.¹⁹ The charter in fact innovated little save the actual monopoly of wine in the Gascon trade, most of the clauses merely formalised customs for the regulation of the trade which had been in force for years. The monopoly in the wholesale purchase of Gascon wine in fact lasted only a year, and then all native merchants were given the freedom to buy wine in Gascony. The Vintners did, however, retain the retail monopoly, a factor which had a profound influence in the future development of the Company.

The rights and privileges granted to the freemen of the Vintners' Mistery were limited to the trade with Gascony, and although this formed by far the largest section of the wine trade, other types of wine

were imported. Sales of Rhenish, Spanish and sweet wines were regulated by special ordinances and both the royal and city authorities had always been careful to keep these wines out of the Vintners' jurisdiction. It was not permitted, therefore, to sell these wines in taverns that also sold Gascon wine. The city attempted to keep the sale of sweet wines in its own hands by only licensing three taverns for their sale, but this experiment failed and it then agreed to issue licences to sell sweet wines to any freeman, or even to any foreigner, who was prepared to pay a fee to the corporation. During the second half of the fifteenth century an increasing number of new types of wine entered England, particularly from Greece and the Iberian countries. This was the result of several circumstances. Both the daily lack of co-operation from the Londoners and the course of the Hundred Years War which began in 1338 with France, with all its attendant dangers to trade, had persuaded the Bordeaux merchants at the end of the fourteenth century to try and expand their market in the rest of Europe. This, particularly after the English loss of Gascony in 1453, opened England up to other foreign wine dealers. Among the new varieties, the best known were the sweet wines, malmsey from Crete, romeney, a similar wine, but less highly thought of, from the Ionian islands and later from the Canaries. Osey came from the Lisbon region, though sherry-sack from Spain was later in reaching England. All these sweet wines travelled better than Bordeaux wines, and in many cases if they had not lasted longer than a year, it would not have been possible to import them. They were allowed to be sold for about double the price fixed for Gascon wine, and the wines from Spain and Portugal also fetched higher prices.²⁰ The increasing sales of these wines thus diminished the value of the monopoly in Gascon wine granted to the Vintners.

The wine trade was closely regulated in all its aspects and never more so than in the retailing of wine. The city authorities were in a position to enforce these regulations, and rarely failed to do so. The taverners of London who sold Gascon wine in their taverns were members of the Vintners' Mistery. They sold their wine by the gallon, pottle, quart or pint, and were distinguished from those who sold wine retail from their homes by the sign of a bush or leaves hanging outside the tavern. On one occasion, the commonalty of London petitioned the mayor and aldermen to ensure that these signs did not extend more than seven feet over the highway, and given the usual narrowness of medieval streets, they can hardly be blamed for such a petition. As early as 1309, there were 354 taverns in London. There and in Westminster there was great demand

over and above that by the native population, and taverners almost invariably put up their prices when they expected a large number of nobles and their retinues in the city. The king on occasions expressly forbade this, as for example in 1330, when the retail price of wine was fixed with specific reference to occasions when there was to be a great gathering of people.²¹ There were a number of prosecutions against taverners who charged excessive prices, but throughout the period the retailers consistently attempted to resist price restrictions and to avail themselves of any profitable markets, whenever circumstances brought together a gathering of any sort, be it of nobles, merchants, soldiers or pilgrims.

The taverners were subject to a great many restrictions. First, there was a fixed price at which they were supposed to sell their wine. This was known as the assize of wine and was regulated for the entire country at the assize courts, hence its name. Like other fixed prices, for bread and ale in particular, the price was fixed according to the abundance or scarcity, year by year, of the commodity. It proved almost impossible for the authorities to force taverners to sell at the regulation prices, but the letter books of the city of London are full of proclamations of the prices fixed and of fines levied on vintners who defied them. In 1321 the Vintners and taverners petitioned the king and his council to the effect that the mayor of London had made a proclamation at the time of the last vintage that no taverner should sell a gallon of wine for more than 3d. This the taverners had done as best they could, but now some wines had arrived from La Rochelle for which the taverners had had to pay a much higher wholesale price and could not then afford to sell it for less than 4d. per gallon. Moreover, they were, every year, heavily assessed by the Treasurer and barons of the Exchequer, to their great impoverishment, and they therefore prayed for a remedy. Whether or not the king and council gave a sympathetic hearing to this plea is not recorded.²²

The only consolation to the Vintners in the matter of price-fixing was that they were at least consulted over it, since the royal writ to the mayor on the subject usually bade him take counsel with the vintners with a view to determining a fair price. In addition to this, the Vintners' Mistery appointed the four surveyors of wine, whose duty it was to ensure that the wine sold in the city was wholesome and sold at the correct price. In 1364, the year in which its charter endorsed this right of appointing surveyors, the Mistery petitioned the mayor and aldermen that the surveyors might be upheld in their duties and offenders receive due

punishment.²³ Because the price was fixed by the city authorities and not by internal regulation of the Mistery, offenders were tried by the court of the mayor and aldermen, the equivalent of quarter sessions within the city, and were not dealt with purely as a Vintners' matter. Any wine that was being sold at illegally high prices was forfeited and the mayor and aldermen had then to render an account for it at the Exchequer.

Price-fixing was not the only restriction that taverners had to contend with. The process of retailing wine was highly regulated from the moment a wine-ship docked to the moment a customer drank his wine. When a cargo arrived at the wharf, it was not allowed to be discharged from the ship before it had been gauged by the king's gauger or his deputy. It had then to be stored in the owner's cellar or warehouse for a period of three days. During that time it was not to be sold to retailers, but only to fellow wholesalers or to lords buying it to store for their own use. After the expiration of three days, it was open to general sale, but no sale was legal unless it was effected through the Vintners' elected brokers. These men were not usually themselves vintners, for a broker was not permitted to trade in the kind of goods for which he was a broker, but was chosen from among the most reputable men in the city and sworn before the mayor and aldermen. Before 1369 their intervention was general but not obligatory. The broker was not permitted to act as a host to any foreign merchant nor meddle with the brokerage of any other trade. He was not to arrange a sale between two strangers to the city, one of them had to be a freeman, and every broker was to tender good advice so that honest men could sell their wares to trustworthy buyers, who were able to pay. If a broker put forward an insufficient purchaser and a merchant lost his wares without payment for them the broker was held legally responsible. With this onus upon them it is hardly surprising that the brokers' fees were quite substantial.²⁴ In 1285 there was a move to have the fees reduced. The city authorities received a letter from the king, who had been given to understand that all merchants selling wine in the city had been accustomed time out of mind to pay a brokerage fee of 6d. per cask. He had been lately informed, however, by certain persons on behalf of 'our beloved Gregory de Rokesle' (mayor at this date and one of the richest and most influential of merchant vintners), that in fact merchants had been accustomed of old to pay no more than 2d. per cask, and on the strength of this had commanded the brokers to charge no more. He now understood from Gregory and others that they had continued to charge 6d. He therefore requested the authorities to appoint a commission to enquire

into the matter. The commission, composed of both city and foreign merchants, came to the conclusion that the fee had always been 6d. and never anything else. Although foiled on this occasion, Gregory had his way in the end, for the following year he and other leading men in the city issued an ordinance, by whose decision the brokers and merchants swore to abide, that from 25 March, the brokerage fee was to be fixed at 3d. per cask, although until that date it was to remain at 6d.²⁵

No taverner was permitted to sell the wine he had purchased until it had been assayed. The assayers were eight or twelve men chosen by the mayor and aldermen from among those vintners of greatest experience, and it was their duty to assay the wine in all the London taverns and have each tun marked at its value according to the current price fixed for its type. The mark had to be at the front of the tun so that the buyer could see it, and each tavern customer had the right to see his own wine drawn. The taverner was allowed to add the dregs 'low down upon the lees' of the higher priced wines to the tuns containing the lower priced wines, but the 'droppings' had to be thrown away and any taverner found adding those to wines for sale was liable to imprisonment.²⁶

On 14 February 1370, the Vintners' Mistery presented to the mayor and aldermen their ordinances for the government of taverns, in order to have them ratified. Apart from those regulations already discussed, they included one forbidding the sale of the new season's wines until all that of the previous season had been removed from the tavern's cellars and stored elsewhere, to avoid giving any dishonestly inclined taverner the opportunity to sell old wine for new. There was also rigid demarcation between the types of wine sold. No tavern that sold white wine from Gascony, Rochelle, Spain or any other country was also permitted to sell Rhenish wines. Anyone found guilty of infringing this rule had his tavern closed for a month. The same was the case for sweet wines, and these had to be sold in taverns devoted exclusively to their kind. All taverns had to sell their wine in measures that had been tested and sealed by the alderman of their ward as a standard measure and any offending vessel was forfeit and its owner fined half a mark (6s.8d.). The doors of the cellars where the wine was laid down in each tavern had to be kept open, without even a cloth hung in front of them, so that one member of every party drinking in the tavern might enter the cellar and inspect the tun from which their wine was being drawn. Each offence against this ordinance cost the taverner 40d. Because, as the ordinances put it, 'often divers things occur which need amending or punishment and cannot be

known or perceived before hand and as to which people of the trade have a better knowledge than anyone else', the Mistery ordered four men of the trade who were not taverners to be chosen and sworn to search for defaults and see the ordinances were kept. They were to have the power, in company with a sergeant of the mayor's, to sequestrate the taverns of offenders until the fault was redressed. The four men thus elected as searchers took an oath to survey all the wines for sale in the city and prove and assay them in the presence of sergeants deputed by the mayor and aldermen, to see that the wines were wholesome. Any unsound wine they found they were to present to the mayor and aldermen, and they were also to certify to them the number of vessels of old wine lying in cellars. Any unsealed pots they found they were to confiscate and present to the City Chamber. This oath was first copied into a City Letter Book in 1310, thus clearly emphasising that many of the provisions in both the ordinances and the 1364 charter had in fact long been in force.²⁷

It cannot be supposed that all the ordinances regulating taverns were kept all the time, and the city records are full of cases of taverners who were accused of infringing them. In 1304 John Botoner the younger was charged with having two casks of new wine stored among the old; having admitted his guilt, it was judged that he forfeit the new wine. Sometimes the attempt of a taverner to charge more than the regulation price led to a general fracas. In November 1306, Robert and Ellen de Wych and the servants at their tavern were charged by Henry de Scheleford with having assaulted him and friends after they had offered to pay 3½d. for a gallon of wine and a quart according to the proclaimed price and not 4d. as they demanded. They then imprisoned him all night, for which Henry claimed £40 damages. Robert and his wife in their defence charged Henry with drinking one and a quarter gallons of wine and eating a half-penny loaf of bread for which he refused to pay and assaulted the landlord, his wife and a servant, for which they in turn claimed £5 damages. The jury, from the parish of St. Michael At Corn, found both parties guilty of assault but that since the plaintiff had lost his tunic and been imprisoned by the defendants until the sheriff's sergeant ejected him, he was to be awarded one mark (13s.4d.) in damages. In 1343 John Beauflour was charged with selling ordinary wine at 6d. per gallon when no vintner was permitted to sell it at more than 4d. He acknowledged his guilt and was freed, presumably after a stiff warning. It did little good, for he promptly committed the same offence again and was straightway sent off to prison during the pleasure of the mayor and aldermen. Nor

was it only taverners who committed this particular offence, for in 1355, a fine of 10s. was paid to the Exchequer on behalf of William Doget, vintner, who sold twenty gallons of red wine for more than 6d. per gallon. The Dogets were a prominent vintner family and William was probably the father of Walter Doget who was master of the Mistery in 1370.²⁸

There were constant proceedings over the question of allowing customers to see their wine drawn. In May 1350, Roger Torold, taverner, and Bartholomew, the taverner of Nicholas le Blake, were charged with refusing this freedom to one of their customers, John Cortoys. They both admitted their guilt and were committed to prison until they could pay the City Chamberlain a fine of half a mark each. The record does not say whether the court investigated the reason for their offence and found that they were perhaps selling cheap wine for good or old wine for new. It was obviously a regulation the taverners resented, although it is difficult to see why unless they intended sharp practice. Twenty years previously, the entire Vintners' Mistery had been fined twenty marks for refusing to let customers see their wine drawn, and it was proclaimed that all their measures had to have the aldermanic seal indicating that they held the right amount. The affair seems to have started with a heavy influx of wine into the city, leading to a proclamation by the authorities that the best Gascon wine was to be reduced in price to 4d. per gallon and reiterating the regulation about customers seeing it drawn. The result was that the taverners closed ranks and shut their doors, refusing to sell the wine at all. On hearing this the mayor and sheriff went through the middle of Vintry and Cheap Wards (the two wards with the greatest number of taverns) discovering if it were true and taking the names of offenders. At least thirty taverners, including two women and John de Oxford, already the alderman of Vintry Ward and later to be both mayor and sheriff himself, were named. The mayor then summoned twelve of the best men from each ward and requested them to hold an inquisition into the affair. They found that not only had all the taverners closed their doors and refused to sell their wine, but that at least two of them, Hikeman le Taverner of Smithfield and Reginald de Thorpe, had been selling wine behind locked doors at the old prices, and that John de Oxford and thirty-two others . . . The record remains unfinished and it is from another source that the corporate fine is known.²⁹

The most serious offence by taverners was the adulteration of wine. In 1419 a proclamation was issued against counterfeit romeney (a wine

similar to malmsey) which as a sweet wine was expensive. The proclamation sets out the kind of adulteration very vividly and is therefore worth giving in full. Because, it declared, 'for some time both English and aliens, to the common harm of all and the scandal of the city, have been putting wine of Spain and Rochelle and other remnants of broken, sodden, reboiled and unthrifty wine of other countries, which are enfeebled in colour and nothing in value, in various butts and other vessels that are scraped to make resin adhere, gummed with pitch, cobblers' wax and other horrible and unwholesome things in order to reduce and bring again a pleasant colour and a likely manner drinking of Romeneye to smell and taste, to the deceit of all. And not only to put an end to this practice, but also to remedy the great multitude of such wines deceptively counterfeited and meddled with abroad and brought here to sell, called Romeneye, but counterfeited of Spanish and Rochelle, the mayor and aldermen now ordain that no-one within the city or liberties is to sell a gallon of such counterfeited wine on pain of having all his wine and vessels forfeited, and no-one is to meddle with wine in any way, no white with red, old with new, whole with broken or corrupt, Rhenish with Rochelle, or any different kind of growths together on pain of the pillory. Also no cooper or anyone else within the city is to gum, scrape, bind (barrels) or anything else concerned with counterfeiting on pain of the pillory. To ensure obedience to the ordinance, any man who can inform the city Chamberlain of someone breaking it is to have one-third of the forfeited wine.'³⁰

This proclamation is immediately followed in the City Letter Book by the sentencing to the pillory of one William Horold, cooper, for selling romeney in the parish of St. Martin in the Vintry by gumming and scraping two butts with various gums to make old, feeble Spanish wine smell and taste like romeney, and colouring it with powdered bay and other things. In June 1457, Austyn Cassyn was charged with having, in 1454 and with the aid of Richard Cok, cooper, 'falseley and deceivably counterfeited, coloured, dubbed and meddled vi pipes of white Rochelle, wine old and feeble of colour and taste thin, in the cellar of the said Austyn, with red wine called "Trent" (a Spanish wine, dark in colour) and with eggs, alum gum and other horrible and unwholesome things for to induce and bring again a pleasant colour to the sight and likely manner drinking of red wine to the tarrage (appearance) smell and taste of the people.' Whether Austyn was convicted is not recorded. Adulteration was not a fifteenth century innovation, there are many earlier

instances; for example in November 1364 John Rightways and John Penrose were accused, not of counterfeiting, but of selling unsound and unwholesome red wine in the tavern of Walter Doget in St. Leonard Eastcheap for which they had been committed to Newgate. The four searchers of wine for the city investigated the matter and found Rightways not guilty and Penrose guilty. The court then judged that Penrose should drink the unsound wine he had sold and have the rest poured over his head. He was also to be expelled from the Mistery of the Vintners, which meant in effect that he could no longer keep a tavern, and he was not readmitted for five years.³¹

There is not a great deal of evidence in existence about individual taverns at this period, but one or two instances may perhaps serve as illustrations. All taverns were bound to keep the curfew, closing their doors for trade at 9 p.m. when the bells of St. Mary le Bow, All Hallows by the Tower, St. Bride's and St. Giles Cripplegate sounded the curfew. From then until 6 a.m. the city gates were shut, business was suspended and respectable persons stayed indoors. On 24 December 1318, Thomas Drinkwater, taverner of London, leased to James Barfleur, citizen and vintner, a tavern in the parish of St. Olave, Southwark, which Thomas had recently built at the end of London Bridge (identified as the 'Bear at the Bridge foot', a famous house of entertainment from the fourteenth to the sixteenth centuries), to hold it for six years in return for the sum which James had previously advanced to Thomas for the improvement of the tavern. Thomas was to provide hanaps or handled mugs, both of wood and silver, and the curtains and cloths the tavern still required. He also agreed to sell the wine already broached in the tavern and to give James an account of the sale. This is obviously not an average type of lease by any means, but interesting because it appears to initiate the successful career of one of London's most famous taverns. In December 1453, Sir Nicholas Sturgeon appeared in the City Chamber and filed a debt of £12.13s.4d. against Thomas Guy, vintner, who was in arrears with his rent for the 'Paul's Head', a tavern near St. Paul's Cheyne. The defendant made four defaults on payment and finally his goods were seized and valued so that Sir Nicholas might receive his money.³²

Although primarily engaged in the import and wholesale trade, merchant vintners were also engaged in retail distribution. Many leased taverns or retailed directly from their homes and it was common practice to employ a taverner. Taverners rarely had the capital to buy more than a few casks of wine at a time from the importers in the spring and autumn,

and it was quite common for vintners to stock the cellars of taverners who could not afford to buy outright and who were in much the same position therefore as the landlord of today's tied house. In 1311, Edward II, in an attempt 'to amend the dearness of wine in the City', had issued a writ which among other things had forbidden any wholesale dealer in wine to be a taverner under penalty of losing his wine. This regulation, not unnaturally, must have led to an increase of partnerships between dealers and taverners.³³ Nor do the partnerships seem to have been concealed. In the few court cases already cited, Bartholomew in 1350 was described as the taverner of Nicholas de Blake, and John Rightways and John Penrose sold wine in the tavern of Walter Doget.

In the years that followed the 1364 charter to the Vintners' Mistery, several ordinances were issued by the mayor, aldermen and common council giving the vintners' searchers extra powers, and in 1377 their number was increased to six good men of the Mistery of Vintners, and by 1428 that number had been doubled to twelve. In 1427 Henry VI confirmed the charter, but it was not until ten years later, on 23 August 1437, that the mistery was formally incorporated. It thereby received the right to elect four masters or wardens annually, who were to rule the Company, the right to own corporately lands and other property in London worth £20 per annum, the right of using a common seal, of pleading in courts and conducting business under the name of the Masters and Wardens of the Company and Mistery of Vintners of London. The rents from the property were to be used not only for the support of the poor of the craft, but also for a chaplain to say mass daily for the welfare of the king while he lived and for his soul after death (Henry VI was a very pious man but a weak king and was later to be deposed and murdered), for the souls of the king's ancestors and for the welfare and souls of the vintners.³⁴ The incorporation was followed in 1447 by a grant of arms to the Company (see Appendix E). Like the 1364 charter, that of 1437 in some instances merely formalised existing customs. The Mistery had, for a long time past, elected four masters or wardens. In 1416, for instance, the four Masters of the Vintners were enjoined by the city authorities to assemble their company and make known to them that they were not to sell red or white wine at a dearer price than 8d. per gallon or any sweet wine dearer than 12d. on pain of forfeiture of their vessels and imprisonment.³⁵

The Vintners seem to have been stirred into obtaining their grant of incorporation by Richard Meryvale, a vintner who made his will at the beginning of April 1437. In it he left to his executors, all of them vintners,

his property in the parish of St. Edmund, Lombard Street, in trust that if the Vintners were to become incorporated within two years of his decease (and thus able to hold lands), his trustees were to convey the property to the Company to be used for relieving the poor of the craft and for prayers for his soul. If the Vintners did not become incorporated, the property was to go to the mayor and corporation for the upkeep of London Bridge and for prayers to be said in the Bridge chapel. The Vintners moved to obtain their incorporation as soon as the contents of the will became known, for Meryvale did not die, and the will come into force, until 1439.³⁶

It will be seen that some of the main points in the charter are concerned with strengthening the social and religious aspects of the fraternity, to support their poor members and have mass said daily, and this has a considerable significance. Similar clauses are to be found in the incorporation charters of most of the other city companies and yet it may be presumed that control over their trade rather than the relief of poor members was the chief concern of all of them. In fact, although the right to control their trade had never been questioned, in practice it depended almost entirely on each company's political influence, and that depended to a great extent on the maintenance of their social prestige. It was with the aim of establishing a permanent framework for the accumulation of such prestige that the livery companies were incorporated.³⁷ The term 'livery' comes from the French *livrer*, to bestow, and originated in England in the custom of great men giving their retainers special badges or clothing to distinguish them. Emblems and differences in dress were very important in the Middle Ages, and no man cared to be taken for other than what he was. Thus the senior, powerful members of a company did not wish to be indistinguishable from the poorest member, and gradually devised an official costume which they alone could wear. These liveries consisted of two parts, the gown and the hood, in two colours which changed with the fashion or the taste of the company. The earliest distinction seems to have been between those members of the company who wore only the hood and those who wore both, but by the fifteenth century there had grown up a class of freemen in most companies who did not wear the livery at all. For instance, in 1501, only 26 members of the Vintners were in the livery, and although the total membership at this date is not known, it was certainly several times larger. The company seems to have appointed a new livery every year, but this was not as extravagant as it sounds, for the ordinances specifically state that members

were to go to *diriges* (funeral masses) in their last livery save one and to mass in their last livery on pain of a fine of 3s.4d., thus saving their newest liveries for more special occasions.⁸⁸

One of the first results of the Vintners' incorporation lay in the right it bestowed to hold property, and thus to have a hall for the common use of the members. The site of the Vintners' Hall is first mentioned in their records in 1352, when John Stodeye acquired from Edmund de Sutton property lying between two lanes and bounded by the river Thames on the south side and by Thames Street on the north, partly in the parish of St. Martin in the Vintry and partly in St. James Garlickhithe. It is described as consisting of tenements, houses, cellars, solars (or private rooms), rents and quays, and the deed was witnessed not only by the mayor and sheriffs, but by Stodeye's brother-in-law, Henry Picard, his son-in-law, Henry Vannere, and John de Rothyng, Henry Atte Streete, John Chaucer (see page 45), Henry Palmer, John de Wendover and Thomas de York, all prominent vintners. When Stodeye died in 1375, the property was left between his three daughters, Margaret, the wife of Sir John Philpot, Margery, the wife of Henry Vannere, and Joan, the wife of Thomas Goodlake. It was not until 1408 that the property was all reunited in one man's hands. John Michol had acquired it piece by piece from the heirs of Stodeye's daughters, and then transferred it all to trustees, who, on his death, transferred it to his executors. They in turn vested it in a new set of trustees, Guy Shuldham, William de Lunes, Thomas Acton and William Abraham, all of whom were vintners. In 1446, these trustees vested it in Shuldham alone, and in his will, dated 7 November 1446, Shuldham bequeathed the property to the Vintners' Company. All these manoeuvrings with various sets of trustees arose from the fact that John Michol could not, as the law stood in 1408, place it in the Company's possession, and had to grant it to trustees to hold it for the Company.⁸⁹

The property so bequeathed by Guy Shuldham is described by him in his will. It consisted of 'a great hall with kitchen and house for coals to be put in, and a pantry and a buttery and a void piece of land called the yard with a well in the same and all the apparel to the same well belonging, and also a parlour above leaded and a counting house to the same parlour annexed and two chambers above the said house called the counting house'. The Vintners' Hall was like most of the early company halls, which were originally the houses of magnates, great merchants or religious communities, and were taken over and adapted for the companies' purposes. That of the Vintners' was probably Stodeye's own dwelling

house.⁴⁰ Also on the site were thirteen 'little mansions', or cottages, and these, Shulldham ordained, should be let to thirteen poor and needy men of the craft, whom the Master and Wardens were to choose. If there were no needy vintners, the poor men of any kind were to be accepted. The Company was to take no rent from the almsmen, who, in return for their lodgings, were to pray for the soul of John Michol, the original benefactor. The rest of the property was to be leased out and from the proceeds, each almsman was to receive 1d. per week. The Company was to observe the year day of John Michol (the anniversary of his death, 17 April) and say a *dirige* for the soul of him and his wife; wine and ale were to be provided on each anniversary for the members of the Company, the priests and almsmen. Shulldham's will went on to detail the exact amounts to be paid to the priests, for bread, wine and ale for the Company, in alms, etc., for this anniversary. He also ordered that the Master and Wardens contribute 8s.4d. per annum towards the upkeep of a chantry priest in St. Martin's Church to pray for Henry VI and his queen while they lived, and for their souls after death, and for the souls of John Michol and his wife. The money the Company received in rents was to be put in a chest with three keys, two to be held by the Master and Wardens and one by a 'witty' (i.e. having wisdom) man of the Company, to be chosen annually by the Company. The keepers of the keys had the power to lend money accumulated from the rents if they were unanimous about the borrower and were offered sufficient security, and the money from the rents was also to be used for repairing the property. Shulldham's will is typical of its time in its attention to detail in setting up a chantry or charitable trust. The regulation of the precise amount of money to be expended on specific objects, the dual control of keys to avoid speculation by any one party, are all similar to many other wills and so, too, is the final clause with its provision for default on the part of the beneficiaries. If the Company did not observe all the conditions of his bequest, Shulldham placed them under the obligation of paying 100s. each year they defaulted, to the vicar of St. Martin's, who was to use it to say masses for the persons already named and for Shulldham himself.⁴¹

Thus by 1450 the Vintners were firmly established as a livery company with their arms, their fine Hall and their almshouses, replacing the rather less formal organisation which had regulated the wine trade in London for the previous two centuries or more. They held a monopoly in the retail Gascon wine trade, which despite the ill effects of decades of war with France, still provided England with most of her wine and supplied

the majority of London taverns. If the glorious days of the fourteenth century, when the Vintners had provided the city with five of its mayors and a good many more of its sheriffs, had receded somewhat, and the fortunes of the Company had declined with those of the wine trade during the Hundred Years War, the Vintners in 1450 might have been forgiven for hoping that incorporation would usher in a new era of prosperity and with an end to the war they might regain their old prestige and influence. Unfortunately this was not to be so.

Chapter II



Some Medieval Vintners

Who were the men who ran the Vintners' Mistery at the height of its fortunes and what was their place in the life of medieval London? It may be of some interest to look a little more closely at the lives and careers of some of the vintners who dominated the life of London in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, and at some of the less important members of the fraternity, before following the fortunes of the newly incorporated Company.

Citizenship was the basis of public life in London. Only citizens bore the burdens of civic duties, but only they enjoyed political rights and privileges. There was a great gulf between those of London's inhabitants who were of the freedom and the rest, country- or London-born foreigners and overseas aliens. No foreigner could buy wares for which a citizen had offered an equal price, or prove his case against a citizen by foreign witnesses alone, and most important of all, only a citizen had the right to open a shop for retail trade and sell to non-citizens. Citizenship could be obtained in any one of three ways; by patrimony, or inheritance from a father who had been a citizen at the time of his child's birth, by apprenticeship to a freeman for seven years, or by redemption, that is, purchase of the freedom from the city chamberlain before the mayor and aldermen.¹

Although references to the Vintners as an organised body are scanty for the first half of the thirteenth century, there is little doubt of the importance of individual vintners. A few ruling families at that period controlled the city of London. Its mayors, like Richard Renger and Andrew Bukerel, held office for a number of years at a time, and the families dominated the aldermanic class, which in turn controlled almost all the political power in the city. They all held great estates both inside the city and in the surrounding counties, and the leading members were

well established at court and held positions in the royal household. For instance, Richard Renger's uncle, Richard FitzReiner, was a personal friend of King John and from him Renger inherited estates in four counties, and within the city he owned much property in Vintry and Bridge Wards, including the cellars where the Lorraine wine fleet stored its wines. Renger was Master of Exchange from 1226 to 1233 and in 1238 was a keeper of the royal treasure. He was prominent at court during the minority of John's son, Henry III, and indeed enjoyed a particular prestige, for in city deeds he sometimes took precedence over the mayor and sheriffs. In 1232, an Italian creditor of the king, professing himself unsatisfied with the Bishop of Chichester as sole surety, insisted that Renger's name be added to the bond. Andrew Bukerel, mayor from 1231 to 1237, held family manors in Kent and Middlesex and a great block of property round Guildhall. His family stemmed from an Italian pepperer who had settled in London after the Norman Conquest, so it is hardly surprising to find that he followed family custom and himself became a member of the Pepperers' fraternity. He was royal chamberlain of London (that is, the city's treasurer) and actually covered the coronation expenses of the boy king Henry III out of his own pocket. Like Renger, he committed his inherited fortunes to trade, and despite his nominal position as a pepperer, it is as vintners that both men figure in the commercial records of their day.²

Wine was never an exclusive commodity. Any merchant, whatever his main commercial interest, might bring back a few tuns of it, and a considerable proportion of the trade was in the hands of small men, or men whose total tunnage in wine was small in any one year. Men like this, however, would not be described as vintners. Only a man whose patrimony or apprenticeship made him a member of the Vintners' fraternity, or whose main trading interest was in wine despite nominally belonging, like Bukerel, to another fraternity, would be given the name of vintner. In many early cases it is impossible to tell into which of these categories men described as vintners fall.

During the first half of the thirteenth century, safe-conducts and licences were issued by the Crown to a score of London patricians to trade with Gascony, either in their own craft or in those of the Cinque ports and Channel towns. Men like Henry de Waleys and Gregory de Rokesle made individual purchases of 200–300 tuns at a time and both shipped Libourne and St. Emilion claret direct from Gascony to London. Waleys was at one time mayor of Bordeaux itself, and one of the leading vintners

of his day. He sold wine regularly to the royal household, averaging sales worth £100 per annum over twenty years, and in 1261 he received £548 for his year's total sales. To attempt to compare thirteenth century money values with those of the twentieth is an almost impossible task, but as a very rough guide, it was about twenty times as valuable. As a further example, in 1224 the ordinary expenses of running his household cost Henry III about £2,000.³ Gregory de Rokesle, though nominally a goldsmith, was bracketed with Waleys as the leading wine merchant of his day. In 1275 he was appointed royal butler (that is, responsible for the provision of wine for the royal household), and was rich enough to lend the king large sums of money, including £1,000 in 1290. It is reasonably clear that the success of this élite among the vintners depended on royal favour and in particular on sales of wine to the royal household. In the early 1260s, Waleys' annual sales to the household were averaging £300 and in 1261 six of his colleagues received royal payments of £1,400. During the long reign of Henry III (1216–1272), the vintners together with the Goldsmiths virtually monopolised the key London mercantile posts of the royal chamberlainship in the wine trade and the wardenship of the Exchange. Four out of every ten aldermen held important posts in the royal household and with it went an entrenched position in the royal markets. Household supply had become an important element in the business activities of aldermen and indeed, in the wine trade, the Londoners were probably the dominant supply group.⁴

Just how dependent the London vintners were on royal favour was clearly illustrated at the accession of Edward I. The new king abruptly transferred his favour to his Gascon subjects and Gascon merchants swiftly displaced the Londoners from the wine trade. This was accompanied by the royal reorganisation of the wool trade. These two factors had a profound effect on the composition of the London patriciate and disrupted the dynastic social order in London.⁵ During the Barons' War, the struggle between Henry III and Simon de Montfort in the years 1263–1267, the patriciate had naturally supported the king, the leader of the royalist faction in the city being John de Gisors, nominally a pepperer but in fact a leading wine merchant. He was a personal friend of Henry III's, and his ships had carried the queen and her retinue to Gascony in 1252. Other leading royalists were John Adrien, a leading vintner who was mayor in 1270 and 1271, and Philip le Tailor, one of the richest men in the city, who sold large quantities of wine to the household. A popular revolt, aimed as much against the patriciate as against the Crown, swung

the city behind Montfort in 1263, when a commune was installed in his name. His defeat and death at Evesham brought the aldermen back to power, but royal revenge on the city was both savage and indiscriminate. The rebel leaders lost everything, but their royalist opponents fared almost as badly; even John de Gisors had a manor in Kent confiscated. Aldermanic authority may have been restored, but in 1272, as Henry III lay dying at Westminster, there was another resurgence of popular activity over a disputed mayoral election. These last embers of revolt were firmly stamped out after the installation of Henry Waleys as mayor.

Edward I's dislike of London sprang at least in part from the city's role in the civil war, and explains his decision to favour Gascons at the expense of Londoners, but he was impressed by Waleys' strong government of the city and took him into royal service. This powerful vintner seems to have been a tough and authoritative man, but also one with ideas. He planned a new victualling market at the Stocks, on the site of the present Mansion House, new houses near St. Paul's whose rents would help maintain the Bridge, and a new prison, the Tun, in Cornhill. That he could also be unjust is shown in his treatment of the butchers and fishmongers whose stalls cluttered the Cheap. He swept the stalls away, ignoring the lease that their holders had bought with contributions to the city's corporate tax to the Crown. He was powerfully backed in all this by Gregory de Rokesle, his fellow wine merchant. The two of them monopolised the mayoralty for thirteen years, largely because of the impression their government made on the king. In 1275 Edward made Waleys mayor of Bordeaux, using him to liaise with the merchants and the Seneschal of Gascony, helping to plan towns and administer commercial edicts. From obscure beginnings, Waleys rose to be one of the inmost circle of royal servants as well as the leading vintner of his day, both of which enabled him to marry Joan, daughter of Adam de Basing, whose family was one of the oldest city dynasties. He owned manors in Essex and Kent and property in Westminster and fifteen city parishes. He entertained the court in his mansions and in 1299 the Great Council, summoned on Edward's return from war in Scotland, assembled in his hall in Stepney.

Gregory de Rokesle came from a family of Kentish franklins; nominally a goldsmith, his main business was as a wine merchant, and he may therefore be regarded as a vintner in practical terms. He was made royal butler in 1275, having previously served as a taker of royal wines at Southampton. Like Waleys, he was active in the royal service, collecting taxes, lending money, serving as a commissioner in the Anglo-Flemish dispute of 1275.

He was one of the few Londoners to enjoy real favour from Edward I in the form of gifts, tax-exemptions, and a wardship (or guardianship) of a minor worth £200. He was appointed to numerous judicial commissions, and his property included eight manors, five of them in Kent, and his city property, which centred on a great mansion in Cornhill and included the entire estate of William Hardel, the Magna Carta mayor, extended over twelve parishes. On Gregory's death, the chronicler Andrew Horn placed his obituary next to that of the queen-mother, and no Londoner would have questioned such a position, for he was perhaps the last great patrician of the old type.⁶

As soon as Edward II came to the throne in 1307, English names began to replace those of the Gascons his father had favoured. By 1322 London may well have received half the wine imported into England by natives and about two-thirds of the aliens' imports. Of this city trade, Londoners themselves handled between a third and a half, 2,300-3,700 tuns per annum. The number of London merchants involved, about sixty, was only half the number engaged in the wool trade, but much of the shipping they supplied themselves. It was their command of ships which presumably accounts for the very high numbers of fishmongers, and to a lesser extent, cornmongers, who were also engaged in the import of wine, for theirs were the ship-owning trades. In the general structure of the trade there are only two large groups, the Vintners and the Fishmongers, and the Vintners were by far the larger of the two. About twenty-five different crafts were represented in the trade, but the Vintners formed about a third and sometimes a half of the 130 or so importers. Only at the lowest level, among men who imported only a few tuns per annum did they sink to a minority, and then they were never less than a quarter. There was a clear-cut division between the majority of petty merchants and a handful of greater men importing regularly on a businesslike scale. In the years 1318-1323, there were never more than three Londoners importing more than 400 tuns per annum, no more than eight in the 100-200 tun class or five in the 70-100 tun class, fifteen imported 40-70 tuns and thirty-nine under 40 tuns. Few even of these would qualify as London merchants of the first rank by their trading in wine alone. At the top, there were one or two outstanding figures. John de Oxford handled 10-17 per cent of London's total wine imports and between them Oxford, Reginald de Conduit and Richard Rothing controlled practically a quarter of the citizen trade. All three were wardens of the Mistery of Vintners in 1328 and took their place in the inner élite of the city. All

three were immigrants, and Oxford and Conduit became mayors and Rothing sheriff of the city. Oxford and Rothing married daughters of William Combemartin, the greatest of the woolmongers, but none of them founded a dynasty in the old manner. Oxford was at the head of every tax roll and subscription list in the city, but he made no attempt to purchase a great estate, choosing rather to lend his fortune and become the creditor of twenty-one religious houses.

There was no doubt that the men who were responsible for the recovery of the London wine trade in the fourteenth century were definitely less patrician than those who had dominated it in the last years of Henry III. Before 1263, twenty of the ninety-five men known to have been aldermen were vintners, and at least twenty-nine of them were engaged in the trade in some way. Between 1265 and 1307, only eight out of a hundred aldermen were vintners. In the next thirty years there was some recovery in numbers, though the wine trade remained the weakest of the aldermanic interests. Under Edward II the city wine trade which operated independently of the royal sector grew in strength. Richard Rothing may have sold twenty-six tuns of wine to the royal household in 1321-1323, but he did not rely on royal patronage for his livelihood. By 1327, there was a small *élite* in the trade again, but it was a new *élite*. Of the representatives left of the old patriciate, John de Gisors III, grandson of the great royal wine merchant who was a friend of Henry III, was content to make £10-£12 per annum providing cellarage for wine brought from Gascony and there is no evidence that he dealt in wine himself at all. The new *élite* were, like the three leading vintners already named, often not Londoners by birth. William and Gerard Trente were Gascons who settled in London, became citizens and married London wives and bought property. William bought the Hardels' wine-wharf for 640 marks and became an alderman. Bernard de la Rochelle, the plaintiff in a suit in 1305 (see page 21), acted as Gerard's agent before he took out citizenship. William's stepson took his name and carried on the trade, and Gerard's apprentice, Richard de Essex, became one of the city's dozen leading vintners in the 1320s. Many taverner families began to make a niche for themselves by the regular buying and distributing of consignments of wine worth over £20 and getting a hold on the retail trade and small wholesaling in Middlesex. One of them, Thomas de Conduit, was making sizeable purchases from the aliens at Boston and London as early as the 1280s. His son Geoffrey climbed to an aldermanry on a trade which included knights and barons buying £100 worth

at a time, and the latter's apprentice, Reginald de Rothing, took his master's name and, as Reginald de Conduit, eventually became mayor and head of Edward III's wool syndicate. These vintners, who developed a complex system of agencies and partnerships, were a substantial group in city society, drawn from its lesser ranks and from immigrants.⁷

Unfortunately we know very little about the personalities of these successful early fourteenth-century vintners. Stow, the Elizabethan antiquary, says that Reginald de Conduit served as mayor for two years and so impoverished himself in the process that Edward III gave him the yearly rent of some houses in the city to help make up his losses. He also notes that John de Oxford gave during his lifetime to the priory of Holy Trinity two tofts of land, a mill, fifty acres of land and two acres of wood in Kentish Town, with the annual value of 20s.3d.⁸ What do survive, for these and many other early vintners, are their wills, enrolled in the Court of Husting, where city wills were proved. Reginald de Conduit's will expresses his desire to be buried in St. Mary Fenchurch, and leaves his daughter Lucy a tenement called 'Scot o' the hop' (hoop) in that parish.⁹ This may have been a tavern, but many other sorts of shops and houses at the time had names and signs in a fashion now only associated with taverns. It was, of course, a means of identification when few people could read. The will also mentions his wife and three sons and another daughter who was a nun at Clerkenwell. Conduit's obviously close association with the parish of St. Mary Fenchurch serves as a reminder that not all vintners were to be found clustered round the Vintry, particularly if they were taverners. John de Oxford, however, had the church of St. James Garlickhithe at the forefront of his mind when making his will. He left money for the repair of the fabric, for tithes and for candles, and to Philip, the chaplain, money to celebrate mass on the anniversaries of his death for the sake of his own soul, those of his parents and brother, and his father-in-law, William Combemartin. Among other churches to which he bequeathed money were St. Paul's, St. Thomas of Acon and St. Mary, Islington. Many religious houses received bequests, several in the form of a pipe or tun of wine. On the day of his funeral the will ordered £100 to be distributed among the poor of London and another £50 within a month of his death. £20 was to be distributed among 400 blind and lame and £20 among 200 lepers. Turning to more practical matters, he left 5 marks towards the upkeep of London Bridge, and, to the greater and lesser bridges of his home town, Oxford, 40s. and 20s. respectively. His wife Alice was left £50 or her

just dowry, and all the contents of her chamber. Each of his three sons and three daughters received £100 and some silver cups and spoons; in addition, several tenements were divided among his sons.¹⁰ Although his will shows Oxford to have been a very wealthy man, it should be borne in mind, both in his case and those of other vintners, that most real property which a man possessed was not bequeathed in his will. Normally estates or money were settled on younger children when they married and the bulk was then inherited by the eldest son. Oxford's provision for his wife appears meagre from his will, but at the time of their marriage considerable property or money would have been settled on them both for their joint use during their lives and would then devolve automatically on the survivor.

Almost all the vintners' wills begin with the name of the church in which the testator wished to be buried; most, too, left some sort of bequest, however little, to that church. Some left a great deal. Richard Chaucer, who died in 1349, left a tenement with a tavern in La Rirole Street to the parson and parishioners of St. Mary Aldermanbury, charged with the maintenance of a chantry at the altar of SS. Mary and Anne, near the tomb of his late wife Mary, and with an annual payment of 40s. to St. Michael Paternoster for the maintenance of a similar chantry for the souls of himself and Mary, her son, Thomas Heyroun, and others. Mary Chaucer had married three times; the child of her first marriage was Thomas Heyroun, the child of her second, to Robert Chaucer of Ipswich, was John, himself a vintner and the father of Geoffrey Chaucer. Her third marriage was to the testator, presumably a relative of her second husband. Robert Felstede, a wealthy vintner who died in 1350, established no fewer than four chantries, one each in the churches of St. Martin in the Vintry, St. Thomas of Acon and All Hallows, Honeyland and another in the priory of Holy Trinity, which was to be maintained from the rents of two shops and a tavern at the priory entrance. Walter Atte Conduit, a vintner who died in 1354, left his wife Avice £30, the contents of her chamber and all the vessels and utensils in his house, together with the rent from a tenement on the east corner of Bread Street, near Westcheap, in order that she could maintain a chantry in St. Martin in the Vintry for five years after his death. St. Martin's, of course, is the vintners' church, but it is interesting that Walter himself chose to be buried, not there, but at St. Sepulchre without Newgate, probably his local church, though the mansion he left his wife for life was actually in the parish of St. Mary at Hill.¹¹

Apart from the religious bequests, the wills sometimes illustrate family relationships. Thomas Doget, the founder of a line of vintners, died in 1351. He bequeathed to his grandson Thomas, son of his son Walter, various goods, and to Walter himself a tenement and shop in the parish of St. Leonard Eastcheap, where the testator wished to be buried. These premises were to descend to young Thomas on his father's death. Walter was left other shops in St. Margaret, Bridge Street, for his life, to be sold after his death and the money devoted to pious uses, and also his father's estate in Cambridge (a clue to the family's origin) which he was to hold until he had raised £60, the sum for which Thomas de Cotenham stood surety for the testator. John Doget, who died in 1403, left various bequests to members of the family and was buried in St. Leonard's, where he founded a chantry; he was probably a younger son of old Thomas Doget. Walter, the heir to his father, died in 1388, having been a sheriff of London and a master of the Vintners' Mistery. He was also buried in St. Leonard's, leaving money for the maintenance of the family chantry. He left a tenement in the parish of St. Leonard to his younger son John, together with other tenements his wife was holding for her lifetime, but his mansion in St. Leonard's and shops in St. Margaret, Bridge Street went to his heir, Thomas, according to the will of his father, Thomas Doget. William Doget, whose will was proved in 1363, may have been another son of old Thomas and a brother of Walter.¹²

One will, of considerable significance to the Vintners' Mistery, though not made by a vintner, was that of John Gisors III, a pepperer and grandson of the great thirteenth-century wine merchant. He had been alderman of Vintry Ward and had served as mayor seven times when he died in 1351. He desired to be buried in St. Martin's in the Vintry, where many other members of his family were buried, and he founded a chantry there. His son Thomas had predeceased him and his heirs were his two granddaughters, both of whom were married to vintners, Margaret to Henry Picard and her sister to John Stodeye. To Margaret and Henry, Gisors bequeathed all his property in St. Martin's parish, including his own residence next to the church and known in Stow's day simply as the Vintry. John Stodeye and his wife received another mansion known as Gisors' Hall in the parish of St. Mildred, Bread Street, subject to a rent charge of a hundred marks due to Henry Picard (a mark was 13s.4d.). This mansion was later known as Gerard's Hall and was used as an inn. It was in his mansion of the Vintry that Henry Picard entertained the five kings who have made their mark in the traditions of the Vintners'

Company, where the custom of drinking the toast to the Vintners' Company is followed by five cheers in memory of that royal feast. (Details of the feast and identification of the kings are given in Appendix A.) Picard was a very wealthy man before the inheritance from John Gisors. In 1340 he subscribed £200 to a loan of 20,000 marks the city made to the king, and in the following two decades became one of the leaders of a group of city financiers from whom Edward III borrowed heavily in order to pay for his war in France. From the grateful king, Picard in return received a knighthood and an annuity of fifty pounds for life, payable from the customs of the Port of London. In 1357 he was influential enough to be summoned to a meeting of the king's council. He had by that time already served as sheriff and was the mayor of the city.¹³

Another important fourteenth-century vintner was Picard's brother-in-law, John Stodeye, who succeeded him as mayor in 1357. Like Picard, Stodeye was a leading member of the city élite, serving as alderman for Vintry Ward for twenty-four years. He was three times member of parliament for the city and achieved a knighthood. This last may well have been, like Picard's knighthood, a grateful gesture from the king for the great sums of money he had been lent. When he died in 1376 he founded two chantries in St. Martin's, where he was buried, with the generous endowment of twenty-two marks per annum. Picard had no children, but Stodeye had four daughters, all of whom married prominent city men; Idonia was married to Nicholas Brembre, grocer, Margaret to another grocer, John Philpot, Margery to Henry Vannere, vintner, and Joan to Thomas Goodlake. All inherited equal shares under his will, mentioned previously in connection with the founding of the Vintners' Hall. In 1397, Vannere, the only vintner among Stodeye's sons-in-law, was rich enough to assign his wife city property worth £80 per annum by his will, as well as to own a wharf in the Vintry.¹⁴

Finally it would perhaps be interesting to look at some information available for two vintners' widows. Contrary to the generally held view of the lowly position of women in the Middle Ages, women in London, at least, hardly fall into that category. They were admissible into every trade and craft gild, since many, if not most, of these had had their origins in social or religious fraternities containing both brethren and sisters. There was nothing to stop a single woman binding herself as an apprentice, and many did so, even in the more unlikely gilds like those of the armourers, founders or barber-surgeons. Widows of freemen were admitted to the gilds of their late husbands and were permitted to con-

tinue his trade or craft. One of the most interesting of the fourteenth-century wills is that of Joanna, widow of the vintner, John Maykyn, dated 1400. She asked to be buried with her husband in St. Dunstan's by the Tower, and among her charitable bequests ordered her executors to appoint someone to go on a pilgrimage to St. James in Galicia on her behalf (the great shrine of St. James of Compostella, in northern Spain, after Jerusalem and Rome probably the most popular destination for pilgrims in the Middle Ages), and to appoint a chaplain to celebrate masses for a year in the church of St. John Lateran, Rome. Although a surprisingly large number of English men and women made pilgrimages to shrines as far afield as Compostella, Rome and Jerusalem, no other vintner's will mentions them. It is possible that Joanna had taken a vow at some time to make such a pilgrimage and either through inability or disinclination had failed to keep it personally. To her son Richard she left, among other things, her husband's armour and a Thames lighterboat, together with tenements in various parishes for use during his lifetime. On his death they were to go to the rector and churchwardens of St. Dunstan's to maintain a chantry there, and in case of their default, the property was to pass to the wardens of London Bridge to maintain a similar chantry, presumably in the chapel on the bridge, and the residue of the profits was to go towards the upkeep of the bridge.¹⁵

If Joanna can be said to have had a vision that stretched beyond the city walls, the same is hardly true of Alice Walworth. Her husband, John Walworth, a vintner, died in 1396, leaving tenements to his daughter and his wife's daughter, and a leasehold tavern called the *Fleur de Lys* in Fleet Street to Richard Jancok. He also founded chantries in two London churches and in the parish church of Lindfield, Sussex, which was probably his birthplace. There were no specific bequests to his widow, whose jointure was presumably already secured to her. Alice was then courted by another member of the Vintners' Mistery, William Neel, whose home was in Chichester, Sussex, and who was possibly therefore an old friend of her late husband's. Alice does not appear to have been averse to his suit, but she had no wish to leave London, where she was born and where she wished to die. She only accepted William as her third husband, therefore, on the understanding that he would allow her to live in London and not try to make her settle in Chichester. Not trusting in her future husband's word, she made him enter into a bond of £100 with her sister's husband that he would keep his side of the bargain. After the marriage, however, she was persuaded to change her mind and settle in

Chichester. It is to be hoped that this was due to the charms of her husband and the cathedral city, but some degree of coercion by William seems likely, because her sister immediately sued him under the terms of the bond.¹⁶

The next vintner to feature in the affairs of the nation was Richard Lyons, and the form his prominence took was not such as would have commended itself to the general body of vintners. He was of illegitimate birth, and little is known of his early career. He emerges in the 1360s as a wealthy man, but more important, one with a powerful patron in John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster, Edward III's third son. The monopoly in the sale of sweet wines granted him in 1365 by the city authorities can hardly have made him popular among his fellow vintners, and some explanation of the situation is needed. Taverns selling sweet wines fell into a different category from the rest. The Vintners' Mistery had no control over them as they did over taverns selling Gascon wine; although taverners selling sweet wines might be vintners, they could equally well belong to any other company. No taverner was allowed to keep sweet wine in a tavern that sold any other kind of wine and in 1365 the king and his council issued an ordinance that all the taverns in the city and suburbs where sweet wines were sold retail were to be taken into the hands of the mayor and chamberlain. In future only three taverns in the city were to be licensed for such sale, one in Cheap, one in Lombard Street and one in Walbrook, where the wines were to be sold at fixed prices. The profits from these three taverns were to be devoted to the worthy cause of repairing and cleansing the city's walls and ditches. Shortly afterwards the council had to send a further writ to the mayor explaining that it had not intended to prevent any taverner selling sweet wines wholesale. Three months later the city authorities leased the three taverns so assigned to Richard Lyons to hold them for a term of ten years at an annual rent of £200. Since it can be taken for granted that Lyons also made a handsome profit from the deal, it is clear that the sale of sweet wines in particular was a highly profitable business. As Lyons' influence in the royal council at this time was considerable, it may well have crossed many men's minds that the whole thing had been arranged entirely for his benefit. In the November of that year, ten members of the Vintners' Mistery were elected and sworn to make a scrutiny of the sweet wines for sale in Lyons' three taverns, to see that the wines were sound and to condemn any they found bad. The city authorities were thus extending their surveillance of the retail sale of wine to the three taverns which had

previously been without provision for the checking of standards. In February 1366, three aldermen, including one John Pecche, and two members of the city's common council were elected to prosecute 'touching sweet wines', which suggests that something was not as it should be. In 1373 Pecche received a royal patent permitting him to buy and sell sweet wine by retail for a term of five years; this was notwithstanding an ordinance recently made in Parliament forbidding any merchant to sell such wines retail within the realm. It was followed by a writ to the mayor and sheriffs of London ordering them to render Pecche every assistance in the monopoly recently granted him. This was presumably in addition to the monopoly granted to Lyons by the city.¹⁷

These dealings were symptomatic of the politics of the last years of Edward III. The king was sinking into senility and no longer capable of controlling affairs, the Prince of Wales was dying, and power slid into the hands of the Duke of Lancaster and his clique, which included his retainer, Lord Latimer, Alice Perrers, the old king's mistress, and Richard Lyons. Latimer, his son-in-law Lord Neville, and Lyons were the most active members of the royal council and it was apparent that most of their activity was directed towards the building up of their private fortunes. The main export trade of the country, that of wool and cloth, had to pass through Calais, to be taxed there before it left English hands. Lyons got leave from the Privy Council to carry wool direct to other continental ports, thus avoiding taxation and the competition of the Calais 'Staple'. He obtained similar licences for a number of other merchants who presumably paid him well for the favour. He was then appointed farmer of the Calais customs and took the opportunity to levy a higher duty than that authorised by Parliament. When charged with this blatant form of robbery, he claimed that although he had taken some of the excess levy for himself, he had had 'the command of the king and his council to do so'. Lyons and Lord Latimer then discovered another way of enriching themselves. The war with France was going badly, the Exchequer was impoverished and none of the royal debts looked like being paid. They therefore bought up some of the king's debts at huge discounts from creditors who despaired of payment and then took advantage of their position on the council to reimburse themselves to the full extent of the original debt. In the Middle Ages, to make a corner in any commodity, but particularly food, was considered not only illegal but immoral. Lyons and Latimer, going from strength to strength, were also accused of 'buying up all the merchandise that came into England and setting prices

at their own pleasure, whereupon they made such scarcity in this land of things saleable that the common sort of people could scarcely live'.¹⁸

In 1374 Lyons was made an alderman and a sheriff, but his downfall was rapidly approaching. The empty Exchequer compelled John of Gaunt and the Privy Council to call a Parliament in order to levy more taxes. In 1376 the parliament known to history as the 'Good Parliament' met, but having called it into being the government could not thereafter control it when it demanded the reform of abuses before the granting of taxes. Its even greater achievement was to establish the principle that ministers could be called before it to answer for crimes against the common good. John of Gaunt found it politic to sacrifice his subordinates, and both Lyons and Lord Latimer were impeached, that is, accused of treason and tried by the House of Commons. Lyons was found guilty of the various financial frauds he had committed and endeavoured to save himself by investing some of the great wealth he had amassed in well-placed bribes. The king accepted his bribe, not too senile to suggest cynically that it was only some of his own money come back again, but when Lyons sent a barrel of gold disguised as a barrel of sturgeons to the dying Prince of Wales at his palace of Kennington, it was returned immediately, unopened. It was generally believed that Lyons only escaped death, which had been popularly demanded for him, by his bribes, and his eventual sentence was a heavy fine and imprisonment at the royal pleasure. With Lyons was impeached his associate in the sweet wine monopoly, John Pecche, also a much disliked alderman. Despite their conviction by Parliament, it took the city authorities nearly four months to deprive Lyons and Pecche of their aldermanic rank. Indeed neither Lyons nor Latimer were ever fully punished, for the death of the Prince of Wales made it certain that his young son Richard would soon succeed Edward III and his uncle, John of Gaunt, was an obvious candidate for the regency; his subordinates were therefore not pursued too harshly, and Gaunt later felt in a strong enough position to have the acts of impeachment annulled. Lyons at least did not escape final retribution, for during the Peasants' Revolt five years later, he was hunted down and killed by the mob.¹⁹

An inventory taken of the goods of Lyons' house has left us with a vivid picture of the kind of surroundings a wealthy fourteenth century vintner provided for himself. Apart from the hall, the central part of any medieval house, where much of the business of living took place, Lyons had his office, a parlour, four bedrooms, two wardrobes or dressing rooms, and a

chapel as well as the usual offices of kitchen, pantry, buttery and larder. His house is one of the earliest indications of the growing desire for privacy among those who could afford to provide it for themselves. The parlour and four bedrooms would probably not have been found fifty years earlier, where privacy would have been granted only to the owner and his wife in a single chamber and the rest of the household would have lived and died communally. Lyons was in fact divorced from his wife, a thing almost unheard of except among the highest of ranks, and which can have done little to endear him to his contemporaries. His style of life was flamboyant, and the inventory gives some indication of the luxury with which he liked to surround himself. He had a set of hangings to put round his bathtub (for separate chambers for bathing do not appear until the sixteenth century); his hall was hung with Arras, the finest tapestries obtainable, which came from the town of that name in France; he had leopard skins and ermine in his chamber and his bed was hung with red and blue curtains embroidered with 'lyons', the kind of play upon names much beloved by the Middle Ages and frequently found in heraldry. On Lyons' death in 1381, his goods were claimed by his former wife, Isabella Pleydour, on the grounds that the divorce had been annulled;²⁰ whether this piece of opportunism was successful goes unrecorded.

Lyons was almost the last medieval vintner of prominence. Unlike the fourteenth century, the fifteenth saw only four vintners holding aldermanic office in over a hundred years, though of these four, three, Wakele, Seman and Abraham, were also sheriffs. Sir John Lewis, who apparently held no civic office was nevertheless, rich and important enough as a vintner to entertain Henry IV's four sons, the future Henry V, then Prince of Wales, Thomas, Duke of Clarence, John, Duke of Bedford and Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester, to supper at his house in the Vintry. The poet Henry Skogan sent them a poem there, on the theme of spending less time foolishly in lust and vice and more time in virtue and godliness.²¹ Hardly flattering to the princes, perhaps, but an interesting addition to the well-known Shakespearean view of Prince Henry's mis-spent youth. The next generation of vintners, that of Guy Shuldharn, Richard Meryvale, Simon Adam, Thomas Crofton, is important to the Vintners' Company rather than to the city or the kingdom at large.

Chapter III



The Company's Relations with the Crown in the Sixteenth Century

I

In the closing years of the sixteenth century, John Stow was compiling his *Survey of London*, and having written a brief account of the Vintners' Company, he says that 'I repayred to the common hall of that company and there showed and read it in a court of Assistance, requiring them as being one of the principall companies in this cittie (of whom I meant therefore to write the more at large) if they knew any more which might sound to their worship or commendation, at their leysure to send it me, and I would joyne it to my former collection: at which times I was answered by some that took upon them the speech, that they were none of the principal, but of the inferior companies, and so willing me to leave them I departed, and never since heard from them, which hath somewhat discouraged me any farther to travail amongst the companies to learn ought at their hands.'¹ Why, it must be asked, did the Vintners display such a remarkable feeling of corporate inferiority at the end of the sixteenth century? If Stow, as an informed outsider, is any judge it was not a view generally held of the Company. To trace the growth of this feeling it is necessary to go back to the mid 1450s, when the newly incorporated Company of Vintners might have been forgiven for hoping that their recently acquired status, and the end of the long war with France, would usher in a period of prosperity for its members. As things turned out, they could hardly have been more wrong. The reasons are to be found in three different circumstances: the great expansion of the wine trade with Spain, Portugal and the Mediterranean countries, the Vintners having their monopoly, it will be remembered, only in Gascon wine; the introduction of hops and beer-brewing into England and thus a new and increasingly popular alternative to both wine and home-brewed ale; and finally the policies pursued by the English Crown in regard to the wine trade.

The Bordeaux wine trade had suffered badly during the years which led up to the final loss of Gascony by the English in 1453. La Rochelle had been lost some years previously and the area under English rule had been steadily shrinking, so that the fall of Bordeaux itself to the French was only the culmination of a gradual process. At the time of the city's fall, English imports of wine fell as low as 3,000 tuns per annum where earlier in the century they had averaged 10,000 tuns, even during the war, and in 1448-9 had been as great as 13,000 tuns (though this was only about half the total imported when the trade was at its height in the previous century). Despite the fact that both England and France needed the Anglo-Gascon wine trade, it did not escape political pressures. Edward IV inaugurated his reign in 1461 with an ordinance forbidding the import of wine from those provinces of France which had formerly been English, in retaliation against Louis XI's economic sanctions against English merchants in Bordeaux. Since these provinces still provided the greater part of the wine drunk in England, such an ordinance could not be strictly enforced. It also had the side effect of increasing the share of the carrying trade in the hands of the Bretons, whose duchy at this date was still independent of the French Crown. Wines carried by Bretons were not immune from seizure by the authorities under this ordinance, but they fared better than Gascon wines carried by English merchants. After Edward IV's treaty with France in 1475 the Bordeaux trade began to pick up again and by the end of his reign in 1483 had reached the level it had been in 1450. By this date, however, the Gascon trade had to face serious competition from other wines.

Sweet wines had long had a minority corner of the trade, being carried from the Mediterranean largely by the Venetians or other Italians. By the end of the fifteenth century English ships were venturing into the Mediterranean, and most included some wine among the cargoes they brought back. The Venetians, anxious at the loss of their monopoly, forbade the export of malmsey from Candia except in their own galleys. Henry VII retaliated by imposing a tax of 18s. per butt or pipe of malmsey brought to England in foreign ships. The tax was soon reduced but the Levant trade was by then having to compete with wines from the Iberian peninsula, where English merchants traded on favourable terms. Romney and malmsey wines, originally grown in the Greek Islands, were by this date being successfully cultivated in Spain and were competing with sweet wines from the Mediterranean. They were stronger than the originals, for strong wines were in great demand in the northern European

markets, partly for their increased potency and partly for their greater durability. Despite the increased range of wine entering England in the course of the fifteenth century, the total imports of wine, including sweet wines, fluctuated greatly. This was mainly due to the effect of the war with France, but even after the loss of Gascony, the bulk of English imports continued to come from Bordeaux so that any political upset between the two countries affected the trade.²

The middle years of the fifteenth century, after 1453, when imports from Gascony had fallen to their lowest point, coincided with the introduction into England from the Low Countries of beer which included hops as a preservative. This was a very different beverage from the ale brewed in most households at the time; it was much stronger, and unlike ale, it both kept and travelled. Beer therefore became a viable alternative to wine, and began to be purchased in bulk, for instance for the use of ships' crews and soldiers, and by the rich for the middle and lower ranks of their household and gradually upon occasion for their own consumption. In most cases the brewing remained in the hands of Flemish and Dutch immigrants, who had sometimes to face ugly demonstrations from the English in xenophobic mood. Despite the increasing popularity of beer, the Tudor period saw a marked revival in the amount of wine imported into England. By the end of the fifteenth century total imports had increased to about 20,000–25,000 tuns per annum, and although the early years of the sixteenth century showed a decline from this total, the accession to the throne of Henry VIII in 1509 marked the beginning of a period of great prosperity for the English wine trade. By the middle years of the century, imports were running at about 30,000 tuns per annum and by the 1560s this figure had doubled, although there were considerable fluctuations from year to year, and 60,000 tuns remained the norm until the last years of the century, when between 1595 and 1603 imports dropped dramatically to 35,000–40,000 tuns.³

It is against this general pattern of the wine trade that the fortunes of the Vintners' Company in the hundred and fifty years following its incorporation should be viewed. As has been seen in previous chapters, the wine trade was rarely free from interference of one sort or another from the Crown and the vintners were affected less by good or bad wine harvests than by political decisions. The Company's means and prestige had obviously decreased during the commercial crisis immediately before and after the fall of Bordeaux. They were badly hit by Edward IV's ban on imports from former English provinces and when, after 1475, the

recovery of the Gascon wine trade looked like improving their situation, they faced further blows on the accession of Henry VII in 1485. Not only did that king decline to renew their ancient privileges for more than twenty years, thus seriously weakening their constitutional position, if not actually abrogating the rights contained in their charter, but one of his first Parliamentary Acts ordered that nobody in his dominions was to buy or sell any wines from Gascony unless they had been shipped to England in English ships, whose crews consisted at least of a majority of his subjects. This was one of a series of moves designed to improve English shipping and had the secondary effect of retaliating against bad treatment suffered by English merchants in Bordeaux. It could, however, have been small comfort to the London merchant vintners who had been forced to ship their wines in foreign bottoms because of the lack of English ships, or to the taverners, who never kept large stocks in hand. In 1495 Charles VIII of France was persuaded to order the Bordelais to restore to the English some of their traditional privileges and in the first years of Henry VIII's reign treaties were agreed on that restored the English position to much as it had been before the loss of the province. Henry VII's measures to stimulate English shipping would have been even more disastrous for the wine trade if the king had not been persuaded to grant licences to his own subjects and to Spaniards and Bretons, with whose countries he was on good diplomatic terms, to ignore his own prohibition. During the rest of his reign, the first Tudor remained on friendly terms with all the main European states and such a general peace had a stimulating effect on trade. The figures given above for the wine trade show that it was no exception.⁴

II

Despite the improvement in trade, which naturally benefited individual merchant vintners, the Company as a body remained in a weak position throughout the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. This apparent contradiction was a result of the Company's relations with both the London authorities and the Crown. The low ebb of the Vintners' fortunes at this time can be strikingly illustrated by the fact that not a single vintner became an alderman between 1456 and 1516. In 1503 the Company made an effort to improve their 'daily decay' by a petition to the mayor and aldermen of London, in which they pointed out that their

predecessors had been able to hold all manner of offices within the city and they had been a 'fellowship of good substance', whereas they had recently greatly decayed. The reasons for this decay, they firmly believed, was due to the large number of freemen who practised as vintners for their living without having experience or knowledge of the Mistery. This was because the Company could no longer enforce their ordinances, authorised both by Parliament and the city authorities. One of the most important ordinances thus flouted was that which forbade any man 'of what condition, estate or degree he may be of', to buy or sell wine arriving in the city before it had lain in the wine cellars for three days and had been gauged. Now, they said, all sorts of people retailing in the city had not hesitated to buy or forestall every type of wine entering the city. This had not only forced up prices, but the king's subjects were not getting good value for the increased amount they were paying. For the relief of the Company, 'now brought in so great misery', they begged that certain ordinances might be enacted by the city and the Vintners might have the power to correct any defaulters.

The mayor and aldermen gave the petition a sympathetic hearing and enacted the ordinances proposed by the Company. They first reiterated the charter of Henry III to the city in 1268, which freed citizens from all customs except the prise of wine, but forbade the buying and selling of goods entering the city until the merchandise had entered the city and been formally put on sale, on pain of the forfeiture of the goods, one half going to the informer, and the other half to the city Chamber. The fact that this law had not recently been observed, at least in the case of wine, was as much the responsibility of the city authorities as of the Vintners, since it was city privileges which were being abused. The other ordinances related more closely to the vintners themselves. They persuaded the Court of Aldermen to agree that in future anyone becoming a freeman by redemption, whose principal livelihood was in retailing wine, was to be translated into the Vintners' Company, rather than into any other company he might choose, so that his apprentices might be trained in the craft. The next ordinance was that every freeman principally involved in retailing wine, of whatever mistery, was to pay 4d. a year to the thirteen poor almsfolk of the Vintners' Company. Any defaulter was to be fined 12d. on the first occasion and on the second to have his house closed up, and appear before the Court of Aldermen and be fined whatever they chose. It is surprising that the Court accepted this particular ordinance, since the Vintners' Company was thus claiming jurisdiction over every

freeman engaged in retailing wine, whatever his mystery might be, and whether he was selling Gascon or any other kind of wine. This they had never been entitled to do. The final ordinance was more readily comprehensible. It required every freeman engaged in the retailing of wine, irrespective of his own mystery, to give each of his apprentices, within a year of his indentures being enrolled, the choice of either being transferred to a master who was a vintner, if he wished to be taught the wine trade, or to a master who was practising the craft to which he had been originally bound.⁵ This meant, for instance, that a freeman who was perhaps a member of the Salters' Company, but who kept a tavern for his living, would not technically be able to keep an apprentice for longer than a year, for at the end of that period he was obliged to give the boy the choice of transferring his indentures to a salter who was practising the trade, or to a vintner to learn that trade properly. This again had no precedent among the Vintners' former privileges.

In 1364 when they had been granted a monopoly in the retailing of Gascon wine, the Vintners had been very little bothered by the tiny amount of wine imported and retailed from other sources, but they had become increasingly aware of their vulnerability in a world of changing trade patterns. Now much wine was being imported and sold over which they had no control. This was one of the main factors that made it possible for so many other freemen to set up taverns without interference from the Vintners. The last of the four ordinances was their first shot in what was to prove a very long drawn-out battle to extend the Company's control over all wine selling and not just over Gascon wine. Throughout the first half of the sixteenth century this aim led them into a protracted struggle with the merchants of the German Hanseatic League, whose London headquarters were known as the Steelyard and who had received many privileges from various English kings. Although most of the moves in this battle were carried out in the formality of the city's Court of Aldermen, the Company were probably the prime movers behind the action since, of course, they had most to lose by the continued competition of Rhenish wine sold outside their jurisdiction. They did not, however, succeed in preventing the Hanse from retailing their wine within the Steelyard.⁶

The success of having their new ordinances ratified by the city authorities in 1503 was followed in 1507 by the king's confirmation of all the Company's charters and ordinances. This ratification was a formality usually obtained at the beginning of every new reign, and there is no

evidence to show why Henry VII withheld it from the Vintners for so long. The confirmation is a handsome document, witnessed by the Chancellor, the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Lord Treasurer, the Earl of Surrey, and the Chief Justices of the Courts of Common Pleas and King's Bench. It is illuminated with Tudor roses and portcullises, and the Vintners' wine tuns and vines, together with the arms of the city and a picture of St. Martin dividing his cloak with the beggar.⁷ Most of the ordinances ratified in it concern the internal workings of the Company and are dealt with elsewhere, but some refer to the Vintners' relations with other wine retailers. The ordinance mentioned earlier, whereby any man becoming free by redemption who sold wine for a living was to be admitted to the Vintners' rather than any other Company, is included, but another, forbidding any apprentice to be taken as a member of the Company unless his master was a vintner also, seems a straight contradiction of the ordinance accepted by the city in 1503 whereby any freeman of another craft who retailed wine had to give his apprentice the chance to become a vintner. The most radical of the new ordinances, however, was one specifying that all freemen of whatever craft who retailed wine were to become 'brethren' of the Company. This was another step forward in the Vintners' attempt to control the entire wine retailing trade and not just the Gascon sector of it. The Master and Wardens were to decide on the sum to be paid by brethren on entry to the Company, but the ordinances laid down that each was to pay 4d. a quarter towards the relief of the almsfolk. This was four times the annual amount mentioned in the 1503 ordinances for retailers who were not vintners, but the penalties for failure to comply were the same. From henceforth, no freeman was to be permitted to retail wine unless he first became a brother of the craft and swore to observe the ordinances. No stranger (presumably in this case meaning a man unknown to the Company and not a non-freeman) was to be admitted as a brother unless three-quarters of the Company consented to it, and no vintner, who had been apprenticed to the craft, was to be permitted to take employment with anyone not a brother of the Company while any of the fellowship was willing to employ him at a reasonable wage. These ordinances concerning the brethren in many ways mark the highest level of the Vintners' achievements in their attempts to extend their control over the whole of the retail trade. There is little evidence to show whether indeed all the freemen of other crafts became brethren, but some of them certainly did since there is a record of their payment of quarterage.⁸

In 1516 the city authorities approached Henry VIII's chief minister, Cardinal Wolsey, with the aim of securing his favour, and in June of that year the Cardinal presented the mayor with a list of abuses in the city for which the king's council required remedies. One of the abuses concerned taverns, and on 17 October the sergeant-at-arms warned all tavern-keepers to appear before Wolsey in the Court of Star Chamber. The Vintners had already anticipated such action and had solicited the Bishop of Durham, the Earl of Derby and others thought to have influence with the council, for their help. They also retained, for a fee of 10 shillings, 'young master More' to act as the Company's counsel. Thomas More was at this time under-sheriff of the city and had acted in various disputes between merchants of the Hanseatic League and city merchants. His father, John More, was also a lawyer and had been recently appointed a judge, so Thomas was usually referred to as 'young More'. He was in considerable favour with Wolsey, so it was a sensible move on the part of the Vintners to retain him. The main accusation against the taverners seems to have concerned the use of suspect measures. All their pots and the standard measures of the Company itself had to be sent first to Star Chamber and then to Guildhall to be tested and sealed as accurate. The Master and Wardens were summoned to appear before the Cardinal and the Lord Treasurer and then before the king's council. The Cardinal, the Treasurer, and the Bishop of Durham were all presented with hogsheads of wine and the affair ended satisfactorily, with the Vintners' measures vindicated and a confirmation of their privileges sealed and registered in Star Chamber.⁹

At the Court of Aldermen held on 20 January 1529, nine persons were appointed to 'oversee and peruse' the ordinances of the Vintners' Company. The Master and Wardens exhibited at the Court a book of articles, rules and ordinances, which had been approved by the Chancellor (Wolsey), the Treasurer and two Justices of King's Bench and Common Pleas, and prayed that the Court would ratify them. No general details of these ordinances are given, but they were in fact those approved by the royal authorities in 1507. At the next Court, on 10 February, the two aldermen appointed to study the ordinances reported that they accepted all save one, the ordinance requiring all who became free of the city by redemption and retailed wine to be translated into the Vintners' Company, so that their apprentices would serve their apprenticeship as vintners. This clause they considered unnecessary, presumably because if all non-vintners had to become brethren of the Company, the apprentices could

thereby serve their apprenticeships as vintners. In the event, the mayor and aldermen assented to all the ordinances, including that one. It may be asked why the vintners had waited so long before having this set of ordinances approved by the city authorities, but their choice of year becomes clear when it is known that this was the mayoral year of Sir James Spencer, the first vintner to hold office since the end of the fourteenth century and 1529 was thus a year of great corporate satisfaction for the Company. Sir James was the son of a Cheshire man, and had become alderman for Bridge Ward in 1516. He had served as Master of the Company from 1516 to 1519 and during this period of office had also served as sheriff.¹⁰

III

There followed two decades of relative prosperity and security for the Company which came to an abrupt end in 1553. In March of that year Parliament, under the young King Edward VI, passed an Act to 'Avoyde the Greate Price and Excess of Wines'. It limited the retail price of wine to 8d. per gallon for Gascon wine, 4d. per gallon for Rochelle and 12d. per gallon for the more valuable wines, including sweet wines. Furthermore, it limited to ten gallons the amount of wine anyone, even tavernkeepers, might store in their houses, unless their income was more than 100 marks per annum from property or they owned goods worth 1,000 marks. From the following Michaelmas (1553), it was to become unlawful for anyone to keep a tavern or retail wine without a licence, to be obtained in cities and boroughs from the municipal authorities and elsewhere from Justices of the Peace. The only exception to this was for merchants who brought their own wines into the country. No-one was to be permitted to have a licence for more than one tavern and there were to be no more than two taverns in any one town, and the Act then specified the towns to be exempt from this ruling, headed by London which was to be allowed forty taverns; York and Bristol, the next two cities of the realm, were to have eight and six respectively.¹¹

The passing of the Act did not come as a surprise to the Vintners, for they had earlier paid Mr. Seymer, clerk of the Parliament, 14s.1d. for a copy of the bill 'devised by certain burghers against us'. In fact the bill probably owed its origin to the increasing puritanism of the last years of Edward VI's government quite as much as to any economic motives. The bill gave as one of its main objects, the curtailing of the great number

of unruly backstreet taverns in London and elsewhere that had recently sprung up. The Vintners hoped to counter the bill with one of their own, which aimed at solving the problem, in the city at least, by abolishing the taverns kept by citizens who were free of other companies. The Company had been pressing the city authorities for some time to take steps against foreigners (i.e. non-citizens) who retailed wine in defiance of city regulations and had met with some success; they now seized the opportunity to take the action one step further. Any bill presented to Parliament which concerned London affairs had first to be approved by the Court of Aldermen, and when the Vintners presented their proposed bill, the Court requested further information before they considered it. No more details are given, but six months later the records of the Court refer to a petition opposing the bill made to it by retailers who were not vintners, and the Court suggested that their case be put in writing and presented to the Lord Chancellor, thus tacitly approving it. By this time, however, the Act had already become law and all retailers, vintners and non-vintners, were equally affected by it. The retailers from other companies therefore decided it was in their best interests to join forces with the Vintners, who began a suit in Parliament.¹²

Nothing more is heard of the bill the Company planned to use as a counter measure to the royal bill, and it was probably never presented to Parliament. Having thus failed to prevent the Act of 1553 becoming law, the Company embarked on an intensive campaign to get it repealed.¹³ This lobbying involved them in fees to officials and councillors, including Mr. Marten, clerk of the Crown, the Recorder of London, Mr. Petre, the king's secretary, and Mr. Eden, clerk of the Star Chamber, large expenses for boat-hire up and down the Thames to Westminster and for meals bought there for M.P.s like the burgesses of York, Hull and Shrewsbury, whose cities were affected by the limitation of the number of taverns, if not so much by the licensing issue, which most concerned the Vintners. Even the yeoman of the Lord Chancellor's Chamber was bought a plume of feathers worth 8s.8d. for his hat, presumably to ensure that the Vintners got access to the Chancellor. Despite this heavy expenditure, the Company failed to get the Act repealed and temporarily abandoned their attempts. The worst effects of the Act were mitigated for them the following September, two months after Queen Mary came to the throne, when they were granted a licence by Letters Patent for all their members to retail wine and keep taverns without individual licences, notwithstanding the Act. In the last year of her reign, the queen also

renewed the Company's privileges. The charter, dated 30 July 1558, regranted the usual rights to hold lands, use a common seal, enact ordinances for the government of the trade, but it is also the first to specify that instead of four wardens, there should henceforth be one master, who had already served as a warden, and three wardens. It went on to appoint John Strelley the first master, and Alexander Carlell, Thomas Derlove and Richard Smythe the first of the new wardens, and specified that on the feast of St. Martin in winter (St. Martin had two feasts, one on 4 July and the other on 11 November), a new master and wardens should be chosen for 'one whole year or two then next ensuing'.¹⁴

With the onset of Elizabeth's reign in November 1558, the Vintners once more took up their lobbying in Parliament. Between 1556 and 1558 the Company had expended time and money in opposing a parliamentary bill 'to make void all licences'. The object of this bill is not entirely clear, but presumably it aimed at abolishing exemptions under the 1553 Act, which, of course, included all members of the Company. Although in the early weeks of Elizabeth's first Parliament, the bill was put to the Commons no less than four times, it did not reach the statute book. Possibly encouraged by this success, the Company returned to the attack on the 1553 Act in its entirety. They had hoped to ensure sympathetic ears in the government by retaining as their attorney Henry Fanshaw, one of the two Remembrancers of the Exchequer, and thus a chief agent of commercial and financial administration, and by diligently waiting on the queen's secretary, Sir William Cecil, at Star Chamber and at the Exchequer. The Company then went on to prepare another bill to be presented to Parliament. In it they proposed the repeal of the 1553 Act and that the Company, 'for the necessary relief of the said Company and the true increase of her Majesty's navy and customs', should have complete freedom to sell wine wholesale or retail. In order to keep the retail price of wine reasonable, the wine of good quality and to combat disorder in taverns, the Company also proposed that it should have the right of survey, control and correction over 'all those retailers who were not freemen of the Company'. The bill, 'devised and drawne by Mr. Wilbrame', was presented in November 1566 to the Court of Aldermen and approved. The Recorder of London, Mr. Onslowe, had earlier been involved in consultations over the bill and it was perhaps through his influence that the Court not only approved it, but committed the five London M.P.s to its support. The Company had already obtained the assistance of Thomas Sackford, Master of the Court of Requests, who

was M.P. for Ipswich, and Mr. Fleetwood, the M.P. for Lancaster. With the aid of these and the London M.P.s, the bill was introduced by a small but influential group of parliamentarians. Apart from fees to those who were consulted over the bill and who helped to draw it up, the Vintners expended considerable sums to gain the influence and goodwill of men who counted. Thomas Sackford received a total of £31.14s. from the Company for his friendship, £20 of which was a gift 'the rather to avoid the loan of £100 which he desired to borrow of this Company for half a year'. Sackford's influence was clearly important and the Vintners had no wish to offend him, even when they refused to lend him money. The Vintners also spent £33.7s.10d. on wine for Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, the queen's favourite, and rather more on canvas and napkins for Lady Cecil, in order to win her husband's support.¹⁵

On 30 November 1566, the bill to 'repeal the Statute for wines' came to a vote in the Commons, with ninety-five members voting for it and sixty-five against. At this point it presumably seemed to the Vintners that the repeal of the obnoxious 1553 Act was within their grasp. Yet the bill was never passed to the House of Lords and never became law. The explanation seems to be that having passed the bill on a Saturday afternoon, after many of their members had been wine and dined by the Company, the Commons voted on the bill again the following Monday morning, and this time reversed its own decision. As Mr. Green suggests, the Vintners may have paid too much financial attention to officials and too little to the men at Westminster; alternatively, the Commons were becoming sensitive to impropriety and bribes and it is possible that many members resented the Vintners' pressure group entertaining members so generously. Whatever the reason, the Company's outlay of £167.8s.3d. was not wasted, since such a large proportion of it had in fact gone to men whose goodwill and support could, and did, benefit them in the future.¹⁶

Faced with their second defeat over the 1553 Act the Vintners changed their tactics. Having failed first to prevent the Act being passed and then to get it repealed, the Company began to press for its own official exemption from the Act. The lobbying costs were far heavier for their suit for exemption than they were for the Parliamentary bill. The Earl of Leicester received the lion's share, £121, most of it in the form of Gascon wine. Sir William Cecil again received material rather than wine, this time a length of velvet worth £30.16s. and many of the officials who had helped with the Parliamentary bill, the Recorder of London, Sir Nicholas

Bacon, the Keeper of the Privy Seal, Thomas Bromley, the Solicitor-General and others all received between £5 and £10 from the Company. The result was a final success for the Vintners. On 17 May 1567, they received Letters Patent from the queen which exempted them from the provisions of the Act they had tried so hard to get repealed. The similar Letters Patent from Queen Mary had lapsed with her death. The Company thereby gained the right for its members to keep taverns and sell wines in disregard of the statute (providing the number of taverns did not exceed the total of forty allowed to the city of London by the Act) and the rights of supervision and survey it had lost. In addition, all members of the Company were pardoned for any offences they might have committed against the Act. The queen, however, reserved the right to make the grant void whenever she wished, and no vintner was permitted to keep more than one tavern. Despite these last two reservations, the Vintners had succeeded in obtaining almost all they sought. In a graceful gesture of thanks to the men to whom they obviously thought they owed most, they presented two gilt cups with covers to the Earl of Leicester and Sir William Cecil.¹⁷ This did not, in fact, mark the end of the dispute over the Company's licence and the Act of 1553, for there were a number of suits brought against them by retailers who were not members of the Company, but nothing further was enacted to disturb the Vintners' newly regained rights, possibly because Lord Leicester continued to receive regular gifts of wine.¹⁸

What the queen was willing to give to the Vintners, she was also quite willing to give to others. This she proved in October 1576, when she granted Letters Patent of licence 'to all citizens brought upon the trade of retailing wines . . . as amply as if they were free of the Vintners' Company'. The licence did, however, contain a special limitation as to whom the licence applied, and it forbade anyone to keep more than one tavern. It also forbade anyone new to set up in trade without formal permission from the Mayor and Aldermen, and commanded the latter to ensure that the number of taverns did not greatly exceed the legal number of forty, that they were only situated in convenient places and that the owners of all taverns kept the ordinances of the Vintners' Company. The Company, therefore, was able to accept this new licence with good grace, but in January 1581 it was constrained to petition the Court of Aldermen on behalf of its members because the Court had not been doing its duty, and as the petition put it, 'By reason thereof, great multitude do daily set up taverns'. These included not only citizens as specified in the licence,

but strangers and foreigners, who did not hold the freedom of the city, most of the taverns were in unsuitable places and their owners had not been charged with keeping the Vintners' ordinances. The resulting disorder was threatening to bring the whole licence into question and possible revocation. The Vintners therefore begged the Court of Aldermen to place the orders of the Letters Patent in the Repertory of the Court, together with the names of those lawfully included in the trade, the latter to be sent from time to time to the Company, so that they might carry out their task of overseeing the trade efficiently, and deprive anyone failing to observe the limitations of his licence. The Company also asked for a copy of their ordinances for governing the trade to be set down in the Repertory so that no-one could have the excuse of ignorance. These ordinances were mainly the age-old ones of the right of twelve elected vintners to search the taverns and test the quantity and quality of the wines sold, and the measures by which it was sold, and of the Master and Wardens to call the members of the Company together to determine what the reasonable price for retailing the various types of wines should be. They forbade forestalling, the buying up of wines prior to their entry into the city and before they were cellared and gauged, the keeping of more than one tavern and the borrowing or lending of pots, the keeping of more apprentices than could honestly be taught the trade and the taking on of apprentices without presenting them first to the Master and Wardens, and of employing journeymen who had not been apprenticed to the trade. No-one who had not served two years as a journeyman was permitted to keep a tavern, and all members of the Company and all those licensed to retail wine should obey all summons to attend Company meetings, the members of other companies only attending when the matter concerned the keeping of ordinances or the general welfare of the city, and not when it concerned purely Company affairs.¹⁹

Attached to the list of ordinances in the Repertory is a list of the persons from companies other than the Vintners who were licensed to sell wine retail in the city, together with the names of their taverns; they included two drapers, one mercer, two grocers, no fewer than nine merchant taylors, four haberdashers, four clothworkers, three fishmongers, two coopers, two girdlers, one chandler, dyer, salter and cook, and the widow of a barber-surgeon. If it is assumed that all these thirty-four persons so licensed actually kept their taverns, it seems safe to say that there were a good many more taverns in London than the statutory forty, since it is unlikely that only six vintners kept taverns and probable

that at least a number equal to the non-company men did so. Most of the taverns listed in the Repertory were in the city, but two were in Holborn and one in Westminster. When Elizabeth renewed the Company's charter in 1577, she prefaced it with the statement that everyone was free to pursue any lawful calling he chose in order to make his livelihood, a sentiment as presumably unwelcome to all the livery companies, striving to maintain their rights and privileges, as it was to the Vintners. At the same time she repeated and amplified a decree of her father, Henry VIII, to the effect that every freeman of the city and the widow of every freeman, was permitted to sell wine retail in 'London, Westminster, Southwark and the liberties of our Duchy of Lancaster without Temple Bars'.²⁰ This right to sell wine freely outside the immediate limits of the city itself became increasingly important in the sixteenth century, because of changing social habits. London had long been the commercial centre of the realm, but the presence in the city of the law courts, Parliament, and the royal court led increasing numbers of gentry to spend several months of the year in the capital. In previous centuries, except when sitting in Parliament or engaged in litigation, these men and their families would have spent all their time on their estates. The process became more marked in the seventeenth century, when the concept of the London 'season' took shape. The sixteenth century saw increasing numbers, also, of impoverished gentlemen settling in London, because they found it easier to keep up appearances in a city lodging than in large country houses. Both types of gentry demanded entertainment in the city, and naturally they got it, in the form of plays, parks and, of course, taverns, the latter having the added attraction of providing temporary accommodation as well. The gentry, unlike the men of business, preferred to live somewhere convenient both for Westminster and the law courts, and this desire led to the development of that part of London between the city and the palaces of Westminster and Whitehall, that is, Holborn, Covent Garden and the parish of St. Giles. There are many contemporary references to the great inns of Holborn and if the vintners of the city of London had not had the right to open taverns in these newly expanding areas without applying for a special licence, a good deal of this profitable trade would have passed them by.²¹

IV

Despite their constant and partially successful struggle to retain their privileges and extend their control over the retail wine trade, there is no doubt that the Vintners never regained the heights they had commanded at the end of the fourteenth century. Their authority was constantly weakened by the grant of licences to freemen, who although obliged at least in theory to observe the Company's trade regulations, owed no loyalty to the Company itself. The Vintners retained only minimal influence over the pricing of wines. They assisted the city authorities to put into effect royal ordinances as to the retail price of wine, and the experience and knowledge of the senior members of the Company led the authorities to seek their advice before granting licences to other freemen or making decisions affecting the sale of wine. In this administrative capacity, however, the Vintners had to accept that while they were always asked to participate in decision-making, so, too were representatives of the wine retailers from other companies.²² The fact that much of their authority in the city remained related to the retail trade also suggests that it was in this, and not the wholesale business, that most of the senior members were engaged by the end of the sixteenth century, if indeed they were still engaged in the wine trade at all. This is borne out by the lack of city offices held by vintners, for these offices were generally held by the wealthy, and no matter how respectable the retail wine trade might have been, it did not usually generate large fortunes. Throughout the sixteenth century only two vintners served as Mayor, Sir James Spencer, previously mentioned, and Sir Cuthbert Buckle, who died in his mayoral year, 1594. Buckle was alderman for Bridge and Bassishaw Wards, and like Sir James he was not a Londoner, having been born in Yorkshire. Only one other vintner, Henry Prannell, held office as sheriff, and two others were aldermen; this hardly compares with the five mayors, five sheriffs and five other aldermen chosen in the fourteenth century. Yet it was an improvement on the intervening century, when the Company provided the city with only three sheriffs and one alderman.

The Company's participation in the pricing of wines, exercised in November when the price at which wine was to be retailed for the coming season was proclaimed by each new mayor soon after he took office, was now limited to protest if they felt the prices were unreasonable. The prices usually covered Gascon and Rochelle wine, sweet wines and some-

times Rhenish. Retail prices remained remarkably stable in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, usually at 6d. per gallon for Gascon and Rochelle and 12d. for sweet wines in the fifteenth century, rising to 8d. and 16d., respectively, in the early sixteenth. These very slight rises in price and the long periods during which it remained unchanged are remarkable in comparison with the wide fluctuations that marked the wholesale prices; these naturally reflected good and bad seasons at a period when no large stocks or reserves could be kept. The Vintners tried to impress upon the authorities how unjust it was to force the retailer to sell at a fixed price wine he bought at greatly differing prices from year to year. Although the Company did not gain the right for retailers to sell at their own discretion, which was what they would have preferred, they achieved a compromise when it was decided that the wholesale prices were to be fixed as well. Unfortunately, the great ministers of state chosen to set the prices, the Chancellor, the Treasurer, the President of the King's Council, the Keeper of the Privy Seal and the two Chief Justices, were not the men best qualified to do so. The new measure, although designed for the protection of the retailer, was highly unpopular among all sections of the wine trade, and the authorities entrusted with the task of enforcing the prices were unable to do so. This led to more stringent measures. The Parliament of 1532-3 enacted a statute condemning the merchants in London who refused to acknowledge the fixed prices and hoarded wine in the hopes of securing greater prices later, and ordered them to sell it at the set prices or forfeit the wine altogether. In 1534 the maximum wholesale price of Gascon and other French wines was fixed at £4 per tun and four years later it had risen to £5 and remained more or less at this level until 1541, but by 1544 it was £8, falling to £6.13s.4d. the following year and then back to £5 where it remained until 1553.²³

Judging from the complaints of the retailers that they could not purchase wine at the authorised price, and the resulting ordinances reiterating the penalties against vintners and others who sold wine wholesale at higher prices, it seems clear that the low regulation wholesale price was rarely adhered to. In 1537 Parliament was forced to enact a further statute because of complaints from retailers that although the fixed price was £4 per tun, they were being forced to pay as much as £7 or £8 per tun; if they were then compelled to retail at the fixed price, they simply could not make a living. To improve the situation, the new statute empowered the municipal authorities to raise the retail prices when occasion demanded. This, of course, tacitly acknowledged the failure of

the Government's attempt to fix wholesale prices. The Act of 1553, quite apart from its other consequences, defeated its own expressed aim to avoid excessive prices, because the scare it gave the trade led to a general increase in prices. Wine remained expensive throughout Queen Mary's reign and then its price began to rise rapidly again during Elizabeth's reign. In 1564 the wholesale price of Gascon wine was £6.8s.8d. per tun; in 1566, the year the Act of 1553 was repealed, the price rose by £1 per tun. By 1572, because of 'civil wars and dissention' in France and 'unseasonable weather', the price rose by a further £1. Two years later the best Gascon wine had risen to the incredible price of £17 per tun, largely because of the troubles in France. In 1575 the queen forbade merchants to import French wine unless they were willing to sell it at a wholesale price of £10 per tun. This not unnaturally provoked vigorous protests from the Company. The Wardens, Stephen Skidmore, William Gryffin, George Doddes and Robert Wythens, on behalf of the Company, refused to sell wines at the price set by the Privy Council. The Court of Aldermen were obliged to commit the four of them to prison until further order. There is no record of when they were released, but it was probably no longer than a few weeks. On 30 July 1576 the Master and Wardens received a letter from the Privy Council warning them that the queen was considering revoking the Letters Patent she had granted them in 1567 because 'they have without reason doubled the price of wine as it was before'. The Master and Wardens were ordered to appear before the Master of the Rolls and enter into bonds signed by them and sealed with the Company seal that neither they nor any member of the Company would hereafter sell any wine above the appointed rates. Unfortunately the amount of the bonds is left blank in the letter, which goes on to order them to call the rest of the Company together and take bonds from all their members for the same purpose. Despite these severe measures, the wholesale price of wine rose steadily for most of the remaining years of the century until Gascon wine was about £16 per tun and Rochelle about £14, and short of abolishing the trade altogether, there was little the Crown could do about it.²⁴

There is no doubt, however, that these great increases in the price of wine were a source of anxiety to Elizabethan economists. Despite measures to improve English shipping in the earlier years of the century, Thomas Burnabe, writing to William Cecil in 1552, talks of the decline of English shipping as a 'wonderful discommodyte' to the realm. He goes on to attack the London merchants and the 'rich halls of lands' (i.e. the

companies), who have a great annual revenue from rents, fines and quarterage and do nothing but spend £600 or £700 per annum on making great feasts every month or six weeks in their halls, causing victuals to be dear. Burnabe therefore suggested to Cecil that the decline in shipping could be improved by ordering each company to own the ship or ships it used to carry its own commodities; the companies were quite wealthy enough to sustain any losses and there was financial advantage to them also. Original as Burnabe's ideas may have been, Cecil obviously did not feel they stood much chance of being implemented. Thirty years later, in 1581, striking a note familiar to modern ears, Cecil was recording his own anxieties over the English balance of trade. England was importing far more than she was exporting and the main beneficiary was France, whose power no English statesman has ever wished to see increased. If England ceased to import such unnecessary luxuries as spices, silks, and above all, wine, her balance of trade would show a marked improvement. Cecil's own habits, if the Vintners' gifts to him of cloth rather than wine are any indication, seem to have been abstemious, but in that he differed greatly from his average countryman, who would have been outraged at any suggestion of a ban on wine imports. Yet Cecil undoubtedly had a strong economic case. Quite apart from the imbalance of trade, the English were forbidden to barter at Bordeaux as they had been accustomed to do all through the Middle Ages, now they had to pay for their wine with the gold the country gained from selling its commodities in Spain and the Low Countries. To reduce the amount of wine for sale, Cecil also noted approvingly, would cut down the number of taverns where the poor wasted their substance and became disorderly, and would encourage the consumption of beer and ale and thus the home growth of grain. England was, according to Cecil, importing about four times as much wine as it used to, and Robert Hitchcock, writing at about the same date, estimated that wine and other French imports were worth six times the amount of goods exported to France annually.²⁵

Burnabe's plan for the company-owned ships may never have been put into practice, but his was not the only voice raised against the companies' lavish expenditure. Another writer, this time referring more specifically to the Drapers, Clothworkers and Dyers, felt that if they were to be as willing to bestow as much money in advancing the public good as in feasting in their halls when they elected new wardens, and triumphing when one of their number was elected mayor, the city of London

would be much improved. These strictures were aimed at the great trading companies rather than the poorer craft companies, but the Vintners, although falling into the former class hardly justify such attacks in the way several of their fellow companies did. Few of their members seem at this date to be heavily engaged in the import trade and as will be seen in a later chapter, their feasting hardly fell into the £600 or £700 category! The Vintners' main preoccupation for most of the period was to ensure and extend their control over the retail trade and prevent the Crown from bankrupting their members. Much of the Company's resources was spent lobbying and in legal suits and since only a handful of their members held civic office, the occasions for conspicuous display were as limited as the Company's means.

One of the main points at issue between the Company and the Crown in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries was the provision of casks for the use of the royal household and the navy. This was the old medieval right of the king to commandeer food for the royal household and carts and horses for his journeys at a price fixed by the household officials. By the sixteenth century there had been many attempts to put an end to this system of purveyance, all of them unsuccessful. Casks were supplied by the brewers and coopers of London as well as by the vintners, and although demands by the royal household had lessened as it became less peripatetic, those by the navy had increased. Purveyance was naturally resented by those called on to supply the goods, and by none more than the vintners. In July 1576, the Privy Council was forced to write sharply to the Master and Wardens that Mr. Bashe, surveyor of Her Majesty's victuals for sea causes, had been ordered to victual certain ships for a voyage as quickly as possible and therefore needed a large quantity of casks. These, said the Privy council, reprovingly, 'the said Vintners for their owne private gaine hide and purloine from the purveyors of the said Mr. Bashe and convert them to staving and other purposes'. The Master and Wardens were therefore required to see that the purveyors got the casks they wanted at the customary prices and in future that the queen got casks when she needed them.²⁶

There is no doubt that the Crown abused its right and London suffered considerably more than most cities and towns. In 1604, in an attempt to rid themselves of the burden, James I was offered £50,000 a year by the city in commutation of all his rights of purveyance; this after thirty-six statutes had pronounced it illegal! He refused. Bowing to the inevitable, the Company therefore decided to come to some regular and sensible

arrangement that would make the burden bearable. In December 1608, a committee of the Court met Lord Knollys, Treasurer of the Household, the Comptroller and members of the Board of Green Cloth, and between them settled that the Company would supply 600 tuns' worth of casks each year at times and in quantities as the household required. In January 1610, the household asked for a further 100 tuns, to which the Company reluctantly agreed. It approached the Board of Green Cloth with a suggestion that it might be permitted to compound the service for an agreed sum of money, but this was refused. A regular arrangement was, however, more satisfactory than arbitrary demands and encouraged by the success of its agreement with the household, a similar one for supplying the navy was drawn up between the master and wardens and Sir Marmaduke Darrell and Sir Alan Apsley, Victuallers of the Navy. By it, the Company agreed that the city's retailers of wine should furnish 200 tuns' worth of casks to the navy each year, to be delivered to the storehouse at East Smithfield. For these the navy would pay the Company's cask-taker at a rate of four shillings per tun of cask plus 8d. for its carriage. While the agreement lasted no retailer could be dunned for any more casks, but if the navy required extra casks for a special fleet, then the Vintners would do their best to supply them at a reasonable price. The Company's casktaker was to be given authority to collect a further 100 tuns of casks each year from brewers, coopers and vinegar-makers at the same price. One year's warning had to be given by either side for the dissolution of the agreement. The Company then drew up a complete list of vintners liable to provide casks, 188 in all, plus fifteen taverns whose owners were not named; each retailer was assessed at between two and six tuns of casks per annum, and thus knew exactly where he stood. The casktaker appointed was Thomas Symonds, who was given a commission of one groat (4d.) per tun of casks he collected.²⁷

The new system was in fact no less burdensome than the old, merely better organised, and it would be expecting too much to assume that all differences between the Company and the royal household and navy were thereby eliminated. In September 1619 the Vintners felt ill-used when they agreed to an extra impost of casks only to find that the navy did not use them for the purpose it claimed to need them for. The Company applied for their restitution, but probably did not get them. Four years later, in 1623, Sir Alan Apsley and some associates procured a patent against the free use and sale of casks. It cost the Vintners £65 to overthrow the patent and the retailers agreed to be assessed to reimburse the

Company and the Brewers, who had also contributed to the cost of the suit. In March 1627 a committee visited Apsley in his office as Purveyor to the Navy over the question of some extra casks he wanted urgently. They could agree on neither quantity nor price, but at the second meeting it was arranged that he should have 200 tuns at four shillings a tun, the price paid for the regular annual contribution, upon his promise that next time he required extra casks, he would pay at a rate of eight shillings per tun.²⁸

Chapter IV



The Early Organisation of the Company

I

To an ambitious Tudor merchant, his company was the road to civic dignities. In the fifteenth century there is no evidence of any alderman belonging to a company which was not included in the list of the twelve great livery companies compiled in 1516. In that year, the Vintners ranked eleventh out of twelve, and if the final list of precedence had been drawn up later in the century, it is probable that they would not have appeared in the first twelve at all. In the early sixteenth century, therefore, it was desirable for a man to be a member of the twelve companies if he was aiming at a civic position; it later became essential.¹ Having managed to maintain their position as a major company, the Vintners were assured that there would always be a number of ambitious men who would desire to become redemptioners or transfer to their ranks from lesser companies, a factor which was to be by no means negligible in their financial history. A company's prestige depended largely upon the prosperity of its trade, the degree of control it exercised over its members, and the number of those members. As we have seen, the Company spent a good deal of time, effort and money in maintaining its control over members and extending it over all retailers who belonged to other companies. It was relatively easy to control the retail wine trade and the Company aimed at, though it never achieved, a monopoly in that field. The wholesale trade was a different matter. Although the charter of 1364 had granted the Company's members a monopoly of the wholesale trade with Gascony, this was rescinded the following year, when the freedom to purchase wine in Gascony was granted to all native Englishmen. Wine had always been a general trading commodity, and opposition to the monopoly granted to the Vintners was far too strong for it to be enforced. This did not apply to the retail trade and goes some way to-

wards explaining the Company's concentration on control over the retail rather than the wholesale trade.

The membership of the Company in the early sixteenth century reflects its position as eleventh among the twelve companies. There is no indication of the number of vintners in the Middle Ages; although a chronicler guessed the number of taverners in 1309 to be 354, he made no differentiation between proprietors, apprentices and servants. From 1435, however, when the Company's earliest record, a register of freemen, commences, a much clearer picture emerges.² Mr. Edwin Green, in his detailed study of the register for the years 1435-1535, shows that with a total enrolment of 612, there was a steady average of about sixty freemen enrolled each decade. Of this total, 132 were freemen by redemption, eleven by patrimony and the remainder by apprenticeship.³ In 1501, the city authorities drew up a list of the number of citizens in the livery of forty-seven companies and a similar document for 1537 is preserved among the records of the Exchequer. These give the number of liverymen in the Vintners as twenty-six and thirty-three respectively. A detailed study of the two lists suggests that where their figures can be checked against the records of the companies themselves, the lists appear to be underestimates.⁴ The livery therefore comprised approximately one quarter of the membership. This was a somewhat higher proportion than is found in a number of the large companies. It meant that most men who took up the freedom, therefore, and remained active members of the Company, could expect to be summoned to the livery in due course. This may have been due to what was probably a smaller differential between rich and poor vintners than existed in the larger mercantile companies. The smallness of the Company also meant that a lower percentage of its income could be found from quarterage and fees for apprenticeships and freedoms, which added to the attraction of a larger than average number of livery fines. The contributions made by the great companies to the city's finances (particularly for defence or military purposes generally, which were, by the sixteenth century, virtually the sole responsibility of the larger and wealthier companies) were graded according to their ability to pay and therefore the Vintners' share was usually smaller than most. On civic occasions, however, it had to take its full responsibility as one of the Twelve.

Over the following century, the Company's numbers crept gradually upwards. In 1610, 188 vintners were named in a list drawn up to assess what tunnage of casks each was liable to provide annually to the royal

household. Of this number it must be assumed that a proportion were retailers who were not members of the Company. This is borne out by a list of 148 members assessed at sums varying from £30 to £3 as a contribution to the Irish estate. This probably covered virtually every member, so it may perhaps be assumed that between 1501 and 1610 the Vintners' strength had increased by about fifty per cent.⁵

The mode of entry to the Company for the vast majority of its members was by apprenticeship. In general each served a seven-year term, and a few for longer than this. Many came from outside London to serve their indentures in the city, and this was never a bar to their advancement. A number may have returned to their native parts, but both the vintner mayors of the sixteenth century, Sir James Spencer and Sir Cuthbert Buckle, were northcountrymen who remained in London. At the end of his apprenticeship a man was entitled to take up the freedom of the Company for a fee of 2s.0d. and a payment of 4d. to the clerk, though by no means all of them did so. There is in the first freeman's register a copy of the form of oath all new freemen were expected to take; each swore to maintain the craft and keep its counsels from everyone save his apprentices and his wife. This last, a touching recognition of man's frailty, was counterbalanced by an oath his wife had to swear, not to divulge anything to anybody.⁶ When admitted the new freeman was also supposed to wait for two years before opening a tavern for himself, unless he had express permission from the Company. Having been accepted into the Company the freeman was then a member for life, provided he paid his quarterage of 8d. per quarter regularly, and might confidently await his turn to be called to the livery.

Patrimony as a means of entry to the Company was very rare in the sixteenth century, for the sons of vintners were apprenticed to the trade in their turn and thus owed their freedom to their indentures rather than their fathers' positions. In her analysis of the Company's early sixteenth-century membership, Miss Josephine Collins found only three vintners who entered by patrimony in the years 1485-1525, though numbers increased over the next forty years to fourteen, a dozen of whom came from four of the leading vintner families, the Spencers, the Gittens, the Barkers and the Pylbarrows.⁷ This is a pattern to be found in other companies as the sons of the more well-to-do families took up other occupations and professions but retained the family connection with the Company. Sons of lesser families continued to be bound apprentice. Redemption as a means of entry was reserved for the privileged at this period.

Between 1435 and 1535, 132 men paid for the opportunity to become vintners, out of a total membership of 612. Some of them were wine importers, some were butlers to noble households and most had some connection with the trade which caused them to choose the Vintners in preference to one of the other companies. Once members, their freedom to trade in the city was limited to the trade of their gild. In 1503, the Vintners' ordinances (see below page 57) required that redemptioners in other companies who retailed wine should be translated to them, and this was accepted by the Court of Aldermen; as a result, about half-a-dozen men were translated. Although most redemptioners were engaged in the trade, there were always one or two distinguished men who applied for membership. These included men like Roger Machado, who was Richmond King of Arms, and Christopher Barker, who was Suffolk Herald when he was admitted in 1521 and Garter King of Arms by the time he was Master of the Company in 1540. The redemptioners were therefore relatively high in number and probably formed a fairly influential minority.

Once a freeman of the Company, a vintner became part of that group known as the yeomanry. While awaiting his call to the livery there were several chances for him to serve his fellow members. Yeomen acted as waiters at the entertainment on Lord Mayor's day and were fined if they failed to perform this duty. At the entertainment on Election days, the ancient custom was for youngest members of the livery to serve the upper tables in the Hall and the ladies and gentlemen who were guests, while the waiters from the yeomanry carried food to the rest of the assembled company.⁸ As he approached his turn to be called to the livery, a member was likely to be one of those yeomen chosen to be a searcher of wines. They were selected each year at Christmas from among those due to be summoned to the livery, and this was probably the first real taste of corporate responsibility a member experienced. In 1363 there were four searchers, in 1377 this number was increased to six and by 1428 had doubled to twelve. This number remained customary for more than 150 years, but between 1581 and the early seventeenth century it doubled again to twenty-four. The search was carried out in the presence of the Mayor's officers and each tavern in the city was visited in turn to see which of its old wines were still drinkable and which were defective. The searchers also inspected the taverner's pots to see that they were properly sealed and confiscated any that were not. In 1363 the charter specified that the four searchers were to be men who were not themselves taverners,

a fair reservation, but as the proportion of taverners in the Company increased in relation to those who were purely merchants and the number of searchers increased as well, it seems clear that this reservation could no longer be adhered to. The main reason for the increase in the number of searchers was undoubtedly the growing number of taverns, and when it was found necessary to have twenty-four, they were divided into two teams, one visiting the taverns in that part of the city east of the Hall and the other those to the west. By 1610 they were allowed £3 for their dinners and expenses while carrying out the search.⁹

The livery was a self-perpetuating body and selected its own recruits from the yeomanry. This was true of most of the companies, but because the Vintners had a proportionately larger livery, the result was that most yeomen were called in their turn. Each had the right to refuse and no doubt some members preferred to remain yeoman, but most accepted in the end although it was common for some to defer their summons for a year or two. The fine levied on each new liveryman was a fairly substantial one, but its exact size in the early years of the Company is not clear. From among the senior liverymen the Master and Wardens were chosen. In 1437 incorporation no differentiation was made between the two, but gradually the most senior of the four Wardens became known as the Master of the Company, and this was given a legal form in the charter of 1558. The Master had to have held previous office as a Warden and in practice he had usually served twice as a Warden. In the early years of the Company's corporate existence, its officers were elected annually, but at the end of the fifteenth century, in 1492, three-year terms were established. This custom lasted until 1546 when they were reduced to two years. Elections were held at this period on 11 November, the feast of St. Martin in winter. From 1576 they were held early in July, on or about the feast of St. Martin in summer, probably because the November date was too close to the Lord Mayor's election. If a Master or Warden died in office, a new one was promptly elected. Each officer swore the corporate oath before the retiring officers before taking up his position.

The official duties were fairly exacting and entailed considerable expenditure, both of a man's time and his money. Any man elected had the right to decline and pay a fine instead, and a considerable proportion of those elected did just that, but the comparative smallness of the Company meant that most liverymen, provided they lived long enough, were faced with the choice of serving or fining, and unlike larger companies, there was less monopoly of offices by a small oligarchy. The end of the

fifteenth century seems to have seen, to a certain degree, the concentration of influence within the Company into the hands of a circle of successful vintners. This is illustrated by the lengthening of the term of office, which immediately reduced by two-thirds the number of liverymen likely to hold office and correspondingly increased the expense, thus limiting the men who could afford it. Another clue is the small number of names which occur again and again as feoffees in the early wills bequeathing property to the Company (see Appendix D). If this concentration of influence was indeed a factor of importance, then it was not very long-lived, and certainly did not become hereditary. Mr. Green has calculated that between 1435 and 1535, out of a total membership of 612, sixty-four men served in office, and 200 were either officers or were masters of apprentices. Only about a third of the Company's membership were capable of affording apprentices, and the more wealthy a vintner was the more he took, and the more influential he was likely to be in the Company. The expense involved in serving may well have been the reason behind the reduction in the length of the term. The generally hierarchical system based on length of membership meant that a man would be unlikely to be elected to office until he was middle-aged and well-established in his business, and the virtual inevitability of election also meant that he could make some financial provision in advance. Occasionally there were exceptions to this rule; in 1516 John Husee, who entered the Company by redemption in January was elected a Warden the following November. He, however, was a man of substance who had been a clerk of the customs at Southampton and both bailiff and sheriff of that city before coming to London, where he eventually became Chamberlain of the city.¹⁰

Initially there was little differentiation between the various offices, but by the early seventeenth century the Wardens had become identified as the renter, corn or swan and upper wardens. There was as yet no general progress up the scale of wardenships, although it was recognised that the Renter Warden held the most responsible post, since he was the Company's chief financial officer. The payment of the Company's rents was made to him as his title implies, and from this and the income from fines, quarterages and fees, he disbursed all monies for the day-to-day running of affairs as he was directed. This naturally consumed a good deal of his time and certainly necessitated living in the city; in fact in June 1609 the election was held over while Mr. Harrison, nominated for the post, could be asked if he was willing to move to London for a year 'for the dispatch of the Company's affairs'. It would be unlikely that all renter wardens

handled the business of their office with the same degree of zeal and efficiency, but there is little in the records to help evaluate their individual success or failure unless any particular Warden got into severe difficulties. At the end of his year of office, the renter's accounts were audited and at the beginning of the Company's first court book it is noted that Mr. Warden Bate was £219.13s.8d. short in his account. This was a very large sum indeed and presented the Court (see page 82) with an agonising dilemma. They could sue him, of course, but this would create a dreadful scandal and reflect very badly on the Company. On the other hand, Mr. Bate, although poor, was hopeful of benefiting under a will and he assured the Court that he might have his fortunes raised 'by marriage or otherwise'. The Court closed ranks and agreed to allow him time to pay off the debt and in the meantime to 'keep secret his estate'. A year later his position was still uncertain, and the Court ordered him to pay £19 immediately and £20 each year in the future, and to assign to the Company's use a house he owned on London Bridge, while continuing to pay rent to the Bridgemaster himself. The Court promised to continue to keep the matter secret and admonished the clerk not to meddle therein.

The Company's Upper Warden was mainly responsible for attending the Master in all his business, advising and assisting him. The third Warden's task was to deal with the Company's game of swans (which is dealt with in detail elsewhere) and its contribution to the city's corn store. At a time when bread really was the staple diet, the city authorities had always supervised the supply of corn to the capital. As the population grew this became a source of increasing anxiety, particularly in times of scarcity, and in 1514 they decided to keep a municipal store of corn. In 1520 they called on the livery companies to provide a loan of £1,000 to establish a stock. Sixty-five companies contributed, ten of them between £80 and £40, the Vintners' share being only £20. Some companies levied the sum on their members, but Sir James Spencer paid the Vintners' entire contribution himself. By this method the mayor kept the corn supply under his own control while the companies provided the cash. This system continued until 1578, when the companies, dissatisfied with their high cash donations and civic inefficiency, took over the organisation themselves. From that date the Corn Warden was responsible for the Company's share of corn, which was kept in the city's store at the Bridge-house, its sale at a reasonable price and the replenishing of stocks. His accounts were kept quite separately from those of the Company.¹¹

The onus of government began in the early sixteenth century to assume

proportions beyond the capabilities of four men, and in the term of office that covered the years 1528–1531 the first reference appears to a group of liverymen appointed to assist them. This followed a pattern common to other companies. In 1538 the number of Assistants is given as twenty-eight, which probably at this early stage included most of the livery. The Court of Assistants, as this body came to be known, met quarterly to deal with all aspects of the Company's government; it supervised financial affairs, determined policy, adjudicated in cases of dispute between members, administered Company property and the almshouses, aided poorer members and registered apprentices and freemen. In short, it assumed the duties and responsibilities which had previously belonged solely to the Master and Wardens, who now became, as it were, only the first among equals. As time went on it became the practice for those who had already served in office to form the body of assistants, although those co-opted into the Court could pay a fine and be excused if they did not wish to serve.¹²

As the affairs of the Company grew more complex and the membership increased, so the need for one or two paid officials grew. At the time of incorporation there was only one official of this type, the chaplain, who said the obits for deceased members and tended to the spiritual needs of the almspeople. A payment of 8d. per quarter to the churchwardens of St. James Garlickhithe in 1527 'for the clerk's wages at our almshouses', suggests that this duty was usually carried out by the incumbent of St. James or more probably by his curate. The entry in the register of account notes that this was the first time the Company had paid for his services, previously the almspeople had done so. The chaplain who said daily mass and celebrated obits for the members was given 10 marks a year for these duties. His office came to an end at the Reformation and the Company chaplain in future was responsible only for the almspeople. Among the secular officials, the first was the beadle, whose office was already in existence in 1446 when it is mentioned in the will of Guy Shulldham. This was again common among the companies; the Mercers had had one since at least 1398 and the Goldsmiths first have one mentioned in their records in 1473.¹³ When the first register of account begins in 1507 the Vintners' official was paid 13s.4d. per quarter and was known variously as the beadle, the clerk and the renter, the latter because one of his duties was to collect the rent from the Company houses and the name should not be confused with that of the Renter Warden who was responsible for accounting. The first known beadle was William Walpole, who was

translated from the Fishmongers' Company in 1504 and was acting as beadle before 1510. In 1513 he was succeeded by Adam Wright, who was also translated to the Vintners from another company, this time the Mercers. The beadle, apart from taking rents, collected quarterage from members, paid their allowances to the almspeople and distributed any other charity directed by the Court, summoned members to meetings and generally acted as caretaker at the Hall. The establishment of a court of assistants led to the need for a clerk to make a record of their deliberations and from 1537 Adam Wright became the Company's first clerk at a salary of £4 per annum, while his position as beadle was taken over by Edmund Penson.¹⁴ By 1537, therefore, the Company had three salaried officials, the chaplain, the clerk and the beadle. In 1562, the clerk, now Thomas Agar, was enjoying a salary of £6 per annum and the beadle, Thomas Wolverston, one of £4 per annum. Although the beadle acted as caretaker for the Hall, he did not at this date reside there, but lived rent-free in one of the Company's nearby houses. In 1566, after twelve years' service, Wolverston became the first employee of the Company to retire on a pension. He was given £3 per annum, three-quarters of his old salary, and 13s.4d. towards his rent. This sets the pattern for the great generosity with which the Company has always treated its old servants. Salaries for the clerk and beadle likewise were regularly raised to keep pace with Tudor inflation; by 1586 they were £13 and £10 respectively.¹⁵ Between that date and the commencement of the first surviving Court Book in 1608, the beadle acquired an assistant. Edward Okyns had succeeded Wolverston in 1566 and as he grew older it was obviously felt that he required some help with his duties, though not that he should be replaced, and Thomas Dyke was made underbeadle. In February 1610 Thomas Seaman petitioned for the reversion of the post of beadle on the retirement of Okyns, an event presumably felt to be not far off. The Court, however, felt that the underbeadle Dyke had first claim and when Okyns died in June of that year he was promoted to be beadle on the understanding that if he did not prove equal to the task, Seaman should replace him and meanwhile act as underbeadle. Okyns' widow was given a vacancy at the almshouses and in view of her husband's long service, given an extra pension of £2 per annum and the cost of his funeral expenses. Seaman did in fact become beadle on the death of Dyke in 1614.

By 1617 it had become customary for the beadle to be resident at the Hall, but this sometimes led to complications. When Nicholas Hill was

appointed that year, it was specifically ordered by the Court that he was not to have all his children to live with him in the Hall; the number he might bring is unfortunately left blank in the minutes. He had also to give a bond that neither the Company nor the parish of St. Martin was to be financially responsible for any of the children. In August 1625 both Hill and his wife died of the plague then raging in the city and the Court ordered all the doors of the Hall to be locked up and the keys given to the Master. One of them, together with a key to the yard, was given to John Love, who was 'to lie in the Hall for the better security, he being old and without children', until a new beadle and under-beadle could be appointed. When the latter, Edward Organ, was chosen, he was given one of the almshouses, recently vacated, as his residence, provided he remained unmarried. He did not linger as a bachelor for long, because in 1631 he petitioned the Court for some financial assistance, partly because he had become a liveryman, and partly because of the expense of his children. The Court gave him £5 to pay off his debts and buy apparel for the children and promised to give the first two of his children placed in service £5 each. Organ died two years later and the Court paid his next quarter's salary of £3 towards the relief of his children, giving it to Mr. Spilman, who had married their aunt.¹⁶ The clerk also lived in Company accommodation. In 1594 Henry Beverley had rooms in the newly-built gatehouse, though these may have proved too small, for the next reference is to the clerk's house, implying that Beverley was now installed in one of the Company's houses. In 1609, when John Child was elected clerk on the death of Lawrence Minshull, he was given an extra £10 on his salary because Minshull's widow, who was in much distress, was permitted to remain in her house for a year. She was also given a gratuity of £80, £40 for herself and £40 among her children. This was a very considerable sum of money, but was given in lieu of an annual pension. John Child went on to serve the Company as clerk for forty years, one of the longest periods of service in the Company's history.¹⁷

II

The Vintners had been forced to reconcile themselves to their loss of control over the wholesale wine trade, but a great many of their members still participated in it. Miss Collins' analysis shows that every Master of the Company between 1500 and 1540 imported wine into the country

at some point and exceptions among the Wardens were rare. Given the relatively democratic system of serving in office, this means that most members, even if primarily engaged in the retail trade, did some importing as they grew more prosperous. It seems likely that this was facilitated by some informal organisation among members. The Crown's butlerage records show that the main wine fleet from Gascony each year always had a number of ships carrying wine more or less exclusively for vintners, though there is nothing in the Company's records to indicate that it played any part in such arrangements. Several vintners owned ships and it is possible to surmise that the fellowship of the Company enabled men who were just retailers to import their own stocks under the wing of their wealthier brother wholesalers. Since merchant vintners commonly purchased taverns as outlets for their wholesale wine and then leased them to retailers, the distinction between wholesalers and retailers becomes a trifle blurred.

Miss Collins has estimated that usually between a third and a quarter of substantial wine importers, that is, men bringing in more than a hundred tuns a year in the early sixteenth century, were vintners. Thomas Spencer, Thomas Frankeleyn and Richard Hilton were among these, but the biggest importer was Thomas Gittens. He came from a vintner family and probably entered the Company by patrimony in 1521. His imports between 1521 and 1526, a period during which England was at war with France, averaged 131 tuns a year. Although they were not as consistently high, his imports for the year 1523-4 totalled 247 tuns, a year when only five citizens brought in more than a hundred tuns. Much of Gittens' wine probably went to the royal household, certainly he had supplied Henry VIII with wine for the Field of the Cloth of Gold in the summer of 1520. Despite his prominence and this echo of former more glorious days of the Gascon wine trade, Gittens never became Master of the Company. He served twice as Warden, but died before his turn as Master.¹⁸

The fact that almost every vintner in the sixteenth century, merchant or not, had some sort of financial interest in the retail trade, meant that the Company had a very strong incentive to maintain control over its own retailers and extend it over those who were not members. The battle in this latter field has been dealt with extensively in the previous chapter, here the subject is the Company's methods of enforcing the control that it had. The most common method of punishing a member for infringing one of the Company's ordinances was to fine him. He would be summoned

before a Court of Assistants and told of the charge against him; if he failed to give a satisfactory explanation he was fined. Usually he submitted with a good grace, apologised and paid up, putting the money in the Company's 'Poor Box'. If he was recalcitrant, the Company had the power to allow him twelve days to submit, after which they might take a distress to enter his house and take away goods to the value of the fine. In cases of extreme obduracy, the Court sent the miscreant to be dealt with by the Mayor and Aldermen. This usually resulted in a term of imprisonment until the culprit admitted his error, paid his fine and was forgiven by the Company. The earliest Court Book, covering the years 1608-1610, has many cases of fines levied on members for various misdemeanours, such as lending pots, selling defective wine, setting up taverns without first getting Company permission, failing to attend meetings when summoned, and the like.¹⁹ In the earlier years of the Company, physical punishment was reserved for unruly apprentices. In 1530, for instance, 10d. was paid for canvas hoods, rods and whipcord for the punishment of Master Eddis' apprentice, though unfortunately no mention is made of the youth's offence. In 1610 Thomas Williams was convicted of giving away his master's wine and calling him a 'rascally knave'; he then compounded his offence by being insolent to Warden Hobson and the Court had no hesitation in sentencing him to three lashes on his bare body. There is, however, no record of physical chastisement being used on full members of the Company in the sixteenth century. It therefore comes as somewhat of a surprise to find that in October 1609 the Court decided that in future the penalty for adulterating wine was to be one hour in the stocks in the open hall. It was certainly a punishment that was put into practice.²⁰

The Company's ordinances dealing with the general practices of retailing in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries were substantially the same as earlier ones already discussed, but there were a considerable number of others dealing with different aspects of the Company's affairs. Some concerned the attendance of members on particular occasions, absence from which entailed a fine. If a vintner arrived late for a procession or an obit, on quarter days or at any other time when he had been specifically summoned, he was fined 4d., and if he failed to attend at all he forfeited 8d. All the fines raised thus were distributed among the almspeople via the medium of the Poor Box. Members of the Company were expected to go to *diriges* in the last livery save one and to mass in their last livery on pain of a fine of 3s.4d., while to dispose of either of his last two liveries before he got a new one cost a man 20s. The Master and

Wardens were also liable to fines if they failed to perform their offices satisfactorily. They had to summon the craft together once a fortnight between Lord Mayor's Day and Easter and once a month during the summer, and if they did not do so, they forfeited 20s. If they were negligent in attending meetings themselves, or failed to come in their livery, they were liable to a higher rate of fine than ordinary members. Quarrels between brethren it was their duty to repair within three days of learning of them under a penalty of 6s.8d., and at the end of their term in office they had to render to the incoming officer and four other members a full account of the Company's business within a month, or at the latest, two months, of relinquishing office, on pain of 100s. If they declined to serve in office after being elected, the fine was also 100s.

Rules governing the taking of apprentices were strict. No master was permitted to take more apprentices than he could oversee personally, on pain of a fine of 100s., nor was he supposed to give away secrets of the craft until each apprentice had proved himself good and honest. In 1574 the number of apprentices a master might have at any one time was limited to three, although a man who had served as Warden or Master might have four. Over his whole business career, of course, a man might have trained several generations of apprentices. Each one, however, had to be presented, within six months of taking out his indentures, to the Master and Wardens at a court of binding, where, on payment of the customary fee, his name was registered with the Company. It was possible for the Court to cancel an apprentice's indentures if his master could prove that he was impossible to train. There was also one or two moral precepts to which members were expected to adhere. If theft, fraud, usury or betting was proved against a member, he was barred from the livery until he had paid a fine of 20s. and received the Company's forgiveness. If anyone committed adultery he was first given a warning and if he did not reform he was expelled from the fellowship until he had ceased sinning and been forgiven. Any member who permitted bawdry in his tavern, or allowed his servants to use his house for that purpose, was fined 20s. for his own offence or 10s. for his servant's. The Company did not itself exercise the power of closing down a tavern used for immoral purposes, but, as in the case of Jane Gregory in 1609, who was found guilty of keeping a disorderly house, they reported her to the Mayor and Aldermen so that she might be disenfranchised and her sign taken down. Although Company members were exempt from the 1553 Licensing Act, they still had to obtain permission from the Master and

Wardens before they could build or open a tavern. By this means the Company could ensure that the number of taverns in the city did not too far exceed the stipulated number of forty, and that each tavern was included in the search of wines. In December 1610, Richard Dawson erected a tavern without permission and was promptly fined £5 and forced to close it.²¹

These are not, of course, all the Company's ordinances, but they serve to illustrate the main fields of jurisdiction held by the Master and Wardens. They naturally dealt with many cases which did not specifically infringe any ordinance. In August 1608, Simon Wadlow was summoned before the Court and told that he must take down his sign of St. Dunstan and the Devil and 'put the devil cleane out of it and leave St. Dunstan alone'. One fresh problem which arose in the early years of the seventeenth century was the selling of cider. It seems first to occur in 1628, when John Clopton of the Globe in Fleet Street was charged with selling cider in his tavern at 8d. a quart. He was ordered to remove it all from his cellars and to sell no more. He refused and was despatched to the Mayor and Aldermen for suitable chastisement, but the Court was disturbed enough to issue a general directive four days later. Recently, they said, new practices for making money for their devisees and bringing disgrace upon the honest retailing of wine, had been pretended lawful because they were not specifically forbidden by ordinance. Particularly the sale of cider, which though good in itself, if laid in vintners' cellars and mixed with wines was an abuse. They therefore ordered that no retailer of wine in the city or within a three mile radius was to keep in the cellar of any house where wine was retailed any cider, perry or metheglin (a spiced or medicated form of mead) on pain of a £3 fine for each offence.²²

All the ordinances which related to the retailing of wine were designed for the rule of every retailer in the city and not just Company members. Here the authority of the Master and Wardens was backed by that of the city government. In January 1581 the Company had petitioned the Mayor and Aldermen over their concern at the excessive number of people who were setting up taverns in inconvenient places and without being charged to keep the Vintners' ordinances (see pages 65-66). They asked that the Corporation should keep a record of everyone being licensed to keep a tavern and ensure that they all read and promised to keep the ordinances. Also that their names be sent to the Company before they were licensed so that if necessary objections could be raised, and afterwards that their taverns could be checked. The authorities agreed

and a copy of the relevant ordinances was entered in the Repertory. Two years later, as a result of another petition from the Company, a committee consisting of several aldermen, the serving Master and Wardens of the Company and several discreet freemen from other companies whose members retailed wine, was set up, to call together from time to time all those who retailed wine and check that they were lawfully warranted to do so. Anyone refusing to come when summoned was to be committed into custody on the Mayor's order.

In 1608 the control over retailers, who were not free of the Vintners but who sold wine in the city or its environs, was taken a step further when they were all required from time to time to enter into a bond with the Chamberlain of London for £20 each, to observe and perform all the Company's ordinances confirmed by the Court of Aldermen 'for the search, government and correcting of tavernkeeping'. By this date there were several alterations to the ordinances appended to the entry in the Repertory. Now it was specifically forbidden in time of scarcity for any retailer to buy up for his own profit more than he was accustomed to buy; if he did so, the Master and Wardens could force him to sell the excess wine to another retailer at a fair price fixed by themselves. Anyone refusing to do so could be fined any sum they thought fit. No retailer was to permit any servant to draw wine in his cellar or be taught the trade unless he was apprenticed to it and presented to the Master and Wardens. Nor was he to allow anyone else's servants or apprentices to resort to his tavern and riot, play at cards, dice, shovel board or any other unlawful game, or eat or drink in his tavern during the time of divine service or public preaching on the Sabbath, under a 40s. penalty for each offence. If any taverner allowed a woman he knew, or suspected, to be of unchaste life to sit in a private room at his tavern and not openly in a public seat, whereby whoredom might be committed, he was to be fined for the first offence and disenfranchised for the second. Both these last two additions were symptomatic of the increased influence of the Puritans in public life at the beginning of the seventeenth century.

The Court of Aldermen, when accepting these new provisions, laid down rules of procedure in the event of the ordinances being broken. This, they hoped, would prevent controversies and law suits between the Company and offenders from other companies who refused to pay fines and penalties. All the freemen of the Company and other retailers, when notified by the Court that they were charged with having broken an ordinance, were to attend the next Court bringing with them the sum

laid down as the fine for that particular offence; this they would deposit with the Court until the case was examined at the next full Court. If they were found guilty they forfeited the money, if innocent they received it back. In addition to this, any retailer who was not a vintner was entitled to bring to his examination a retailer of his own company, who had borne office therein, to ensure honest dealing. If the latter and the Master and Wardens could not agree as to his guilt or lack of it, then the whole case was to be referred to the Court of Aldermen.²³

III

The financial base on which all the Company's activities rested fell into two sections. The first was essentially a charitable trust. The Vintners had been left specified property by the wills of certain of their members, the income of which they were bound to apply to the charitable purposes named in each will. Cash legacies were usually converted into property to ensure a regular income. These charities could be obits, income for the almspeople or decayed members, loans to young men beginning their careers, dinners for the fraternity or anything indeed the benefactor cared to name. The Company then acted as a trustee, usually unpaid. It leased out the property and applied the rent therefrom to the charitable purpose. The other half of its income, the corporate part, derived from quarterage and fines from its freemen and rent from any property either bequeathed to the use of the Company or purchased from its income. From this part of its revenue the Company paid for its salaried officials, for the upkeep of the Hall, its share of expenses for civic responsibilities, court or livery entertainments, the expenses of its members on Company business, the care of its game of swans on the River Thames, any litigation in which it found itself involved and any other incidental expenses which might arise.

It is not possible to work out the annual income and expenditure of the Company for any one year in the early sixteenth century because the accounting was done for a three year term of office. In the years 1540-1543, for instance, the total income from lands, quarterage, fines and the Company's tackle porters was £523.3s.6d., of which £266.8s. was from rents. From this total, the following disbursements were made: £23.4s.1d. on obits, £59.2s.11d. on salaries and annuities for the almspeople, £39.9s.8d. on quit-rents for Company property, £20 on the king's

subsidy for the Hall (i.e. a royal tax), £35.10s. on cressets and other charges for civic duties, £93.2s.7d. on ordinary expenses for the Hall, £73.4s. on six dinners and £40.18s.11d. on repairs to Company property, together with some small allowances for unpaid rents. These expenses totalled £384.11s.3½d. and left a balance of £138.12s.2½d. in hand at the end of three years. This would appear to be a very healthy state of affairs, but it was a period during which the Vintners were engaged in no litigation or royal suit and received no heavy demands from the Crown, though it equipped John Dyer and John Bell with swords and harness and kersey gowns to do the king service in Flanders in 1543.²⁴

In the next three year accounting period, the Company sold a good deal of its plate for £156.5s.4½. It was bought by five purchasers, all senior members of the Company. What is not clear is the reason for the sale. Two years later, more plate was sold in order to purchase land, and since the mid-1540s were not a time of heavy expenditure, it seems quite possible that the money received for the earlier sale was used for the same purpose. Bequeathing plate or presenting it during one's lifetime was a popular and not necessarily expensive way of benefiting the Company, and by this date, the latter may have had more than it could make use of. What was more sensible, therefore, than to convert the surplus plate into cash and invest the proceeds in land, whose rents would benefit the Company for ever? In 1548 when an inventory of plate, napery and other stuff appertaining to the Hall was drawn, up, there was very little plate left, only thirteen parcel silver gilt ale pots, and a pair of 'lotting tables with clappis of silver and a pinne of silver'. The Vintners also owned two carpets, one for the hall and one for the parlour presented by Alderman Spencer, various banners and vestments and a hearse cloth, tables and trestles for the hall and parlour, and in the treasurehouse there were two great old ships' chests, two old coffers and a desk with a lock and key.²⁵ The Company did not, therefore, have very much of its wealth in the form of goods and chattels. Although from a financial view it was more productive to invest as much as possible in land, the Company was about to embark on a period when it was in almost constant need of cash resources which it did not have. The cost of the lawsuits in which it became involved after 1553 and royal demands for men and money meant that raising money became a matter of borrowing or raising subscriptions from its members, rather than disposing of surplus goods.

The first indication that the Vintners were in debt comes in the 1550-1552 accounting period, when five men are listed as creditors for sums

mostly in the region of £100. Two years later it raised £52.1s.8d. in subscriptions from thirty-five members in sums ranging from £3 to 5s. towards the costs of its suit in Parliament, the obtaining of two licences under the Great Seal and a gift of £58 to Queen Mary. The details of the legal proceedings in which the Vintners were involved have been given in the previous chapter. In addition to this the Company had to pay its share towards satisfying the series of financial demands made by the Crown on the city of London, which, when carried to extremes in the next century, very nearly ruined the livery companies. These demands began under Henry VIII, and for the first two or three decades the Vintners had managed to provide what was required of them. Then by the 1550s, they were forced to begin borrowing money to meet their obligations. Most of the demands made on them were for military purposes, and the Crown's request for money was first received by the city authorities who then apportioned it out among the livery companies. The pattern was set as early as 1522 when Henry VIII needed cash for his planned invasion of France. In time-honoured fashion he asked the city to raise a loan of the huge sum of £100,000 and the city began to bargain. First it declared it to be impossible to raise such a sum and offered £20,000. The king did not take kindly to this, and the companies were informed that they would have to surrender their plate to raise the extra money. On the command of the king's minister, Cardinal Wolsey, a hasty valuation of the plate and ready cash in the Halls was taken, which totalled £4,000. Feeling was running high in the city against the Crown, and Wolsey was forced to accept that for the time being he was unlikely to get much more than the £20,000 offered, although the city had to be satisfied in return with only the personal securities of the king and Wolsey for repayment. The Cardinal made haste to reassure the companies that their plate would only be taken if absolutely necessary, and then at a fair price, but they were nevertheless requested to bring it all to the Tower for assessment. The Vintners were in fact forced to part with some of theirs, but were soon able to replace what was lost.²⁶

In 1536, when the popular uprising, known as the Pilgrimage of Grace, broke out in the north and Lincolnshire in protest against Henry VIII's religious policies, the king wrote to the Court of Aldermen asking the city for at least 250 armed men, 200 of them to be mounted and the rest archers. The Mayor immediately sent a precept to each of the companies, asking them to provide a certain number of billmen and archers, each equipped with a horse and a white jacket bearing the city arms, all of them

to muster at Moorfields within twenty-four hours. The Vintners' accounts show that 'the ten men that we found unto the kings highness when the Insurrection was in Lincolnshire' were also given a dagger and fifteen shillings in prest money (a small sum in compensation for serving), and the Company provided all their protective clothing and weapons. Andrew Reve was appointed captain of the small band. Each company had been asked to supply a specific number of men; the Mercers provided twenty, the largest quota, the Grocers, Drapers, Tailors and Clothworkers sixteen men each and the rest of the companies between twelve and two, so that the vintners in this respect had taken their normal place towards the bottom of the list of the Twelve. A few months after the rebellion the Court of Aldermen resolved that each member of it should provide at his own cost twenty men, fully equipped and ready to serve in case of emergency, while the companies were also asked to keep men ready in reserve. The only alderman among the Vintners was Sir James Spencer, but the Crown's demands for men from London in the decades that followed show the wisdom of the Court's decision to be prepared.²⁷

In the 1540s the Vintners provided men for service overseas on four or five occasions and in October 1549 fourteen men were furnished for the protection of the city itself.²⁸ The Duke of Somerset had been successfully challenged by his rival Northumberland for the control of the boy king, Edward VI, and the governance of England. This time no actual fighting took place, but a more serious threat to London came in 1553 during Sir Thomas Wyatt's rebellion against Queen Mary's Catholicism and her proposed marriage to Philip II of Spain. Wyatt raised the men of Kent and arrived outside London with 3,000 armed men. On 28 January 1554 the Company put fourteen men into defensive array and on Candlemass Day (2 February) they received a demand from the Mayor for twenty-eight more men on pain of death. Wyatt was stopped at London Bridge as the city rallied to the queen and he had to go as far west as Kingston to cross the Thames on the night of 6–7 February. The Vintners had a third demand from the Mayor on 5 February to continue their men in the field. Most of the Company's force were guarding the entry to the city at Newgate when Wyatt's forces pushed through Fleet Street, only to find Ludgate held firmly against them. That night twenty members of the Company spent the night in the Hall armed in readiness, but Wyatt failed to win the city and surrendered. The whole affair cost the Vintners £39.8s.1d. Throughout the rest of the century the Company provided its quota of men when required, but the pattern does not differ greatly from

that already detailed. The most striking feature of the last quarter of the century, in light of the companies' future involvement, is the number of times men were provided for campaigns in Ireland.²⁹

Towards the end of the sixteenth century, the Company's financial position had somewhat improved. It was still engaged in several lawsuits, but these were smaller ones and did not affect the future position of the Company itself, nor did it have much trouble financing the Crown's reduced demands for men. In 1582, for instance, the Company's finances for the previous two year accounting period were healthy enough to show a total of £922 in receipts and only £359.19s.3½d. in expenditure. Compared with the figures given for a three year period forty years earlier, the Vintners appear to be substantially better off, since their expenditure was now considerably less than half their income, while in 1540-1543 it had been about three-quarters of it. The difference in total sums was largely negated by the high rate of inflation in late Elizabethan England. In 1582 the Company felt financially secure enough to advance to Alderman Cuthbert Buckle £100 towards his expenses as sheriff, and when he became mayor in 1593 he received a straight gift of £300 and £445 towards his costs, a total sum almost equivalent to an entire year's income for the Company and an indication of the amount of corporate pride involved. This generosity towards members of the Company who achieved high civic office became a regular practice; Henry Pranell and Sir Clement Skidmore both received £100 on becoming sheriff. The Company could now afford to spend £600 on improvements to the Hall (see page 97) and a further £300 less than ten years later.³⁰ At the end of the century, royal demands began to increase again. The Company lent £150 in two instalments between 1590 and 1592 for fitting out ships. In 1598 £1,040 was lent to Queen Elizabeth, most of it raised in subscriptions from members. When considering loans of this type to the Crown, however, it is worth bearing in mind that for the most part the latter honoured its debts. Most of those who lent in this instance were repaid the following year. In 1604, a year after he came to the throne, James I was lent £780, the Company's share of a city loan of £15,000. This time the sum was assessed on members according to their ability to pay rather than freely lent. The loan was repaid two years later, so that although at this date most loans to the Crown were forced ones, vintners who lent were not under any apprehension about eventually getting their money back.³¹

By the end of the period under review in this chapter, the annual

income of the Company was more than £1,000, annual accounting having commenced in 1586. In 1617 rents totalled £449.5s.4d. and other receipts, fines, quarterage, some particularly large charitable donations and the rents from the newly acquired Irish estates (see Chapter 6), which were always kept separate from the rents received from the London property, totalled £804.13s.2d. Out of this income of £1,253.18s.6d., the Company spent £1,091.9s.8d. The expenditure at this date is rather differently broken down from that of the period 1540–1543. All regular payments on salaries, quit-rents, almspeople and other charities are classified together, making £270.6s.0d. The Company's dinners and meetings cost them £142.9s.11d., and their swan upping £18; suits and gifts, which included all fees to attorneys and counsels, tips to their servants, legal charges, gifts of wine to influential persons etc., came to £152.18s.5d. in a year when there were no noteworthy cases involving the Company, and £469.18s.2d. was expended on extraordinary payments covering the day to day running of the Hall, extra charity, interest on Company loans, equipment for the tackle porters and other incidentals. In comparison with the last analysis for the years 1540–1543, it can be seen that no portion of either income or expenditure had increased or decreased by any marked degree in its relation to other portions with the exception of payments for obits which had ceased altogether.³²

It is clear that the rents from London property formed the basis of the Company's income from year to year. The rents were increased when leases fell in to keep pace with inflation, but this was not a period when the real value of land in the city was increasing to any great extent. It so happens that at the beginning, all the property bequeathed to the Vintners or purchased by them, with the exception of two messuages at Gravesend in Kent, was situated in the city of London. In 1557 Stephen Mason, a vintner of Boxley in Kent, bequeathed 11½ acres in Boxley and most of the contents of his house to the Company on the death of his wife, provided the Vintners sent one hogshead of good apples from his orchard each year to the poor of the Company (i.e. the almspeople). These lands, commonly known as the farm at Wavering in Boxley, together with adjoining land purchased over the following centuries to consolidate their holdings in the parish, remained the Vintners' only agricultural property. In contrast, many of the other great companies owned large estates in the country.³³

At the front of the Company's second account book, which begins in 1582, is a list of their property at that date. It naturally commences with the

Hall, devised to them by the will of Guy Shulldham and then goes on to detail each other bequest of property to the Company and the premises purchased in 1548 in lieu of obits. (For details see Appendix D.) These have remained the nucleus of the Company's holdings ever since, though there have naturally been other bequests and many purchases. Because it was never very wealthy, the Company pursued a cautious purchasing policy, almost always adding adjoining houses to those it already held. Occasionally it rented property itself, like the house on Botolph Wharf leased from the Muscovy Company in 1597.³⁴ Apart from the group of buildings which constituted the Hall, all the Company property was let out on leases usually for terms of seven, fourteen or twenty-one years. The tenant customarily paid an initial premium or fine on entry and then an annual rent. An existing tenant who wished to renew his lease was told to present his offer of fine and rent to the Court, and there was some room for bargaining between the two sides. If more than one person sought a particular lease, the Court usually accepted the best offer made for it, even if this did not come from the sitting tenant; the latter, however, was always given an opportunity to match it. The tenants were generally responsible for repairs, although the Company dealt with major alterations and repairs between tenancies. Occasionally they let property on rebuilding leases, usually for sixty-one years at a very modest rent, so that the tenant might recoup his financial outlay. The Company kept a close eye on all building works, whether their own or tenants; for instance, in June 1608 it was reported to the Court that Mr. Allen was not building the houses which the Company had commissioned in Hartshorn Alley with sufficient wood. The Court therefore ordered several of its members, Mr. Cockshutt, the Company's carpenter, and the Master and Wardens of the Carpenters' Company to inspect the premises. Mr. Cockshutt was one of several craftsmen whom the Company kept on a small retainer and gave their work to regularly.³⁵ In April 1609 the Court took stock of its properties and found that not only were many of them in a state of decay but they lacked a complete record of their holdings and details of each property. It was therefore resolved to appoint a committee of Assistants to make good these omissions and that henceforth at each election of Master and Wardens, a similar committee was to be chosen to supervise all the property and keep proper record of it. After the development of the Court, this was the next major administrative change in the Company's organisation. The committees were usually composed of senior members of the Court and over the next two centuries or so,

although its primary task remained the supervision of property it gradually took on more administrative tasks, leaving the Court itself to formulate policy and endorse its recommendations.³⁶

The property that concerned the majority of vintners, however, was their Hall. No plan or illustration exists for the first Hall and its appearance has to be pieced together from verbal descriptions. The first, given by Guy Shulldham himself (see page 35) differs little from that contained in an inventory of 1546 which includes a kitchen, hall, buttery, parlour and storehouse. The hall itself was wainscoted in 1540 and the parlour windows contained the royal coat of arms and St. Martin's Mark. In 1584-6 substantial improvements were carried out on the existing parlour, the kitchen, the buttery and the pantry, and an entire new parlour was built at a cost of £623.6s.2d. In the following accounting period a further £273 were spent on completing the works. This was a very considerable outlay, more than the total annual income of the Company at the time, and judging by the trades of craftsmen involved, implied a complete overhaul of the hall, as well as a new parlour and other chambers which are unfortunately not specified. In 1587 the new parlour was wainscoted and the arms of the Company and of Stephen Skidmore, one of its major benefactors, were put in the windows. In 1592 the courtyard in front of the Hall was enclosed, both it and the street in front were paved and a substantial gatehouse was built. It was of brick and carried the Company's arms carved in stone and wood over it, and the glazier was paid for six painted quarries (or devices) for its windows. These further works cost £305.10s.5d. and completed the major improvement scheme. In the following year, when Sir Cuthbert Buckle was Lord Mayor and a great feast was held at the Hall at the election of the sheriffs, new windows were put in the hall and its walls were painted with the queen's arms and scenes from stories. It is a pity that most of the subjects for these paintings have been lost to us, but one was probably St. Martin and the beggar, since this was a constant theme in the Vintners' pageantry. In 1604 the clerk initiated some more building work, presumably additions to his office or apartment, for £54 were spent 'for our clerks building at our hall'. The hall was repainted in 1623 by Richard Greenebury for £40, Mr. Warden Milward lending the Company £50 for a year without interest to cover the cost. It was decided by the Court to have a rendering of the marriage at Cana painted life size at the end of the hall in place of the queen's arms and the old story, thus delicately balancing the increasingly religious fervour of the times with the Company's

main trading interest. Since the cost of the cloth was to come out of the agreed price, it was presumably a hanging that Greenebury was painting and not the wall itself. Two months later he was also asked to paint pictures of those benefactors of the Company who had been mayor, these to be placed in that part of the hall where the Nine Worthies had recently been, and at the lower end of the hall to paint over the screen such biblical scenes as the Court should direct.

The Hall had always been supplied with water from its own well, but the late sixteenth century saw many attempts by the city to provide its inhabitants with a wholesome supply of water, and one of these, in 1593, was a lease granted to Bevis Bulmer for 500 years permitting him to set up an engine at Broken Wharf for the purpose of supplying water to all who would pay him for it. The Vintners took this progressive step in 1601 when a watercourse was laid into the Hall through the kitchen wall by means of 51 yards of lead pipe. The following year they paid £5 for the actual lease of the water and an annual rent of 20s., raised in 1656 to 30s.³⁷

The Hall also contained an armoury. It is not clear exactly where on the premises it was situated, but it may well have been the storehouse named in the 1546 inventory. From the number of times the Company was called on to provide its quota of armed men in the sixteenth century, it was obviously sound policy to keep a stock of protective clothing and weapons, which in the event of a national disturbance such as Wyatt's rebellion, could be used to defend the city or the Hall itself. No inventory of the armoury's contents exists, but in 1619 a committee was appointed to buy swords, pikes and gunpowder as they thought needful. It was decided to have Irish hilts fitted to thirty of the store swords and to buy twenty more with similar hilts, twelve old pikes were to be refitted and thirty-eight more purchased. Fifty good bandoliers and a similar number of murrions for the muskets were also added to what was now a well stocked armoury. Underneath the armoury was a grain store. In the early part of the seventeenth century the store was leased out, though in 1629 the tenant was warned that he must not build a fireplace or hearth or allow any trade which might endanger the store of gunpowder above. The grain store was not the only part of the Hall to be leased. For almost a hundred years the Plumbers' Company rented from the Vintners a smaller hall that adjoined their own and several other chambers and used them for their corporate hall. The rent in the 1530s was very low, about £2 per annum, but by 1635 it had risen to £12 per annum. In that year the Plumbers petitioned for an extension to their lease and it was agreed to extend it

for thirty-one years for a fine of £80, they to continue paying the same rent. The Vintners, however, reserved to themselves the right to occasional use of the premises on special occasions. There was a passage between the two halls which was normally kept locked. The Plumbers arranged in 1635 to pay their fine in quarterly instalments, but by 1638 the arrangement had been substantially altered and they were paying £20 per annum for a lease which ran from year to year. At some point before 1651 they relinquished their tenancy, for in that year the premises were leased to Ralph King, an ancient (or past Master) of the Vintners, on a twenty-one year lease, with a fine of £60 and a rent of £2 per annum.³⁸

IV

The Hall was the centre of the Vintners' corporate life. Here they were summoned to take note of wine prices or receive any precept from the Mayor concerning their trade; here they foregathered for any civic occasions, brought business before their Court and met their brother gildsmen, and above all, here they held their entertainments. Members of the Court dined at the Hall on Court days and on days when they viewed the Company's property they dined out at various taverns; in the Company's earlier years members who attended the funerals and obits of brethren were usually refreshed with bread and ale, and, of course, wine, but the main entertainment was at the Company's elections. For many years in the sixteenth century these were held once every three, and later every two years. They included not only a feast but musical entertainment of some kind. The ancient custom on election nights was for the youngest members of the livery to carry food to the upper tables in the hall and to the ladies and gentlewomen among the guests, while waiters chosen from the yeomanry served the rest of the Company. Until 1576 the election feast was held on or about 11 November, the feast of St. Martin in winter. St. Martin's summer feast, 4 July, was also an important social occasion when several obits were kept. In 1538 the chief civic procession ceased to be the Midsummer Watch (see page 100) and its pageants were transferred to the Lord Mayor's day in November. This meant for the Vintners that now two of the most important occasions of the year fell within a few days of each other, but it took them nearly thirty years to rearrange their own election celebrations, putting them in July but maintaining a feast in November in honour of the Mayor.

In 1615 the Court ordered that henceforth there should be four dinners a year for the Assistants, one on each quarter day, but that not more than £5 was to be spent on each occasion. This does not, however, seem to have been put into practice, because seven years later, in May 1622, a further order was entered in the minutes in the following words: 'For the better maintenance and the increase of love and affection amongst this Company, which as it is conceived is much hindered by reason they have not had so frequent and general meetings as other the worshipful companies of this City have used upon like occasions, for which respect it is ordered by this Court that all Assistants of this Company and their wives and the widows of deceased Assistants, are to dine in the hall on two quarter days, Michaelmas and Christmas.' Although no-one but the Court made decisions about Company dinners, the Mayor could and did issue directives designed to influence these decisions. For instance, in June 1626 he issued a precept against lavish feasting because of the hardness of the times, and the Court therefore decided not to hold a feast for the entire Company to celebrate that year's elections, but only to give a small dinner for the livery with no guests and no waiters, to be paid for not out of Company funds but by the old and new Renter Wardens. In May 1630 the Mayor wrote to the Company asking them to refrain from holding banquets in the current time of plague and suggesting that the money saved be used to aid victims of the plague. The forthcoming election dinner was therefore cancelled and only wine and cakes were provided for the livery. Each of the almspeople received 2s.6d. in lieu of their dinner and the sum of £10 saved by the Company sent to the City Chamber.³⁹

Dinners were not the only entertainments that the Company's members enjoyed. Part of its role as one of the twelve great companies was the attendance of its liverymen on civic or state occasions. In the early sixteenth century the chief civic procession was held for the Midsummer Watch. Originally instituted for the better observance of peace and quiet among the people, it had developed into a great torch-light procession consisting of the Mayor and sheriffs accompanied by some 2,000 harnessed (i.e. armed) men equipped by the companies, some on horseback and some on foot, followed by pageants, dancers and entertainments provided by the companies of the serving Mayor and sheriffs. The Midsummer Watch of 1528 during the mayoralty of the vintner, Sir James Spencer, was much reduced because of the prevalence of the sweating sickness. The harnessed men provided on these occasions were usually the

Company's tackle porters, between four and eight of them. In 1518 the Court of Aldermen regulated the number of men to be contributed by each company, and set the Vintners' quota at six, two less than the biggest companies. In the next few years the average cost to the Vintners was about one pound a year. In 1539 Henry VIII banned the Watch because of its cost, but the city in defence of its traditions simply transferred the main elements to the day in November on which the newly elected Mayor rode to Westminster to be presented to the king or his representatives, attended by members of the city guilds. The custom had originated under King John and has continued ever since. In the Middle Ages the Mayor and his escort rode from London to Westminster along the Strand that linked the two separate cities, but in the fifteenth century it became the custom for the journey to be made by water. The Mayor's barge was followed by that of his company and then those of the other companies in order of precedence. In the sixteenth century, the Vintners, like most of their fellows, hired a barge for the occasion. In 1612 it was stated in Court that because of the cost of hiring a barge for the Lord Mayor's Day and other occasions when the livery was commanded to attend by water for any show or service, and because the Company, for want of a good barge, have often gone in fear of their lives and been much disgraced, it had been decided that the Company should purchase its own barge. In 1617 Peter Young was to be paid a salary of £6 per annum for his costs in keeping the barge dressed and ready for use for the Mayor's procession to Westminster and for Swan Upping, for his own wages and those of the requisite number of rowers. This system continued while the Company owned a barge, and the bargemaster, as he came to be known, was invariably a practising waterman. In 1619 Young found a suitable bargehouse at Lambeth and the Company took a twenty-one year lease on it.⁴⁰

There were a considerable number of state occasions in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries in which the city companies played a role. The normal custom was for the functionaries of the royal court to arrange with the civic authorities the part to be played by the city and the latter then delegated roles to the companies. Many times this was no more than lining a route with company stands manned by liverymen wearing their gowns when the monarch attended a service at St. Paul's or was received at Guildhall, but there were other occasions when more was required. In 1509 six poor men of the Company were dressed in white cotton gowns for the funeral procession of Henry VII. Arrangements for the coronation

of Henry VIII and his first queen, Catherine of Aragon, did involve the Company but they are not recorded. The ceremonies attending Henry's later marriages, for which he required public support, kept the Company turning out regularly. The coronation of Anne Boleyn in 1533 meant the hiring of a barge from John Sherborne at a cost of 28s.6d. and the setting up of the Company's stand in Cheapside. In January 1540 the arrival in London of the Lady Anne of Cleves led to the painting of a barge and new velvet coats for the Master and Wardens, together with a great cleaning of harness and replacing of equipment for a muster. Six months later the barge turned out again to escort the Lady Katherine Howard to Westminster, and this time it contained minstrels as well as members of the Company. The greatest demand made on the city by Henry VIII, however, was not for any of his queens, but the state visit in 1522 of the Emperor Charles V. This was the prelude to a joint war against the French and proved very costly for the city. Not only did Henry expect it to provide a reception and entertainment for his guests, but also board and lodging for the Emperor and his entourage of more than two hundred nobles, a hundred household officials and nearly two thousand servants. A committee, on which the Vintners were represented, was set up to oversee the whole visit. Leading citizens were expected to provide accommodation for the more distinguished guests, the Emperor himself being lodged at Blackfriars, which was linked by a gallery to the old royal palace of Bridewell, where Henry was staying. Inns and stables and company halls were requisitioned, and the Vintners provided beds for two of the Emperor's servants at a cost of 37s.2d. The Company's share of the cost of a series of nine elaborate pageants, which totalled £900 and was shared between the city wards and companies, is not known, and was not paid for out of Company funds; probably there was an individual levy among members.⁴¹

When Henry VIII's daughter Mary came to the throne in 1553 the Company recorded a total of more than £70 in costs for their stands for her first entry into the city, her coronation and the entry of her husband, Philip II of Spain, son of the Emperor, but £58 of this was the Company's share of twelve thousand marks which the queen asked for to finance the establishment of a garrison in or near London to prevent disturbances like the recently suppressed Wyatt's rebellion. For her coronation, the Master, David Gittens, asked for an allowance of £4 for a black velvet coat, crimson satin doublet and a matching gown, such as the Mayor had appointed for the leaders of the twelve companies attending the coro-

nation. No mention is made of the festivities for the coronation of her sister, Elizabeth, in 1558, but June 1559 saw a muster before the queen at Greenwich and the Company paid for gunpowder and gunners and rewarded the armourers at the Tower for arming the thirteen tackle porters. There was another muster before the queen, this time at the Artillery Yard, in 1572, in which 'our men' took part, and this time payments were made for new corslets and an ensign of crimson taffeta. England's struggle against the Catholic power of Spain, which culminated with the defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588, meant a pre-occupation with defence and musters became quite regular occurrences.

The only state occasion in the early seventeenth century which might have rivalled Henry VIII's great entertainment of Charles V was the festivities surrounding the marriage of James I's daughter, Elizabeth. She was as popular as the old queen, for whom she was named, and the first royal wedding for fifty years was fittingly celebrated. The arrival of her bridegroom, Frederick, the Elector Palatine, coincided with the installation of the new Lord Mayor, Sir John Swinnerton, and when it was known that the Elector would attend, great preparations were set in train. Twenty-nine men from the Company were chosen to be employed in the Triumph, armed with muskets, and despatched to the Artillery Yard to rehearse. A pageant entitled 'Troja nova triumphans' was written for the occasion by Thomas Dekker, and the Elector attended the banquet at Guildhall, to which so many nobles had been invited that there was barely room for the representatives of the principal companies and none at all for those of the lesser companies. The wedding itself was planned to include a great aquatic procession down the Thames. The royal household requested 600 casks from the retailers of wine, more than half of which were needed to make barricades on the river. In the event, the casks were not required. On 7 November the festivities were replaced by national mourning for the death of the bride's brother, Henry, Prince of Wales, for whom the entire country had cherished the highest hopes. The wedding was postponed and celebrated quietly the following February. This dark omen presaged the tragic career of Elizabeth and Frederick, later to be the Winter King and Queen of Bohemia. The marriage itself not only involved James I in pecuniary difficulties at the time, but later entangled him and his surviving son, Charles I, in a continental war. This was not to be without significance for the Vintners' Company, but the relations between the Crown and the city of London before and during the Civil War require a chapter to themselves.⁴²

Chapter V



The Crucial Years: 1603-1660

I

If the sixteenth century saw the Vintners' Company struggling to maintain and extend its privileges, the seventeenth century saw it battling for its very survival. The three great events in the history of the livery companies have been described as the Reformation, the Plantation of Ulster and the Fire of London.¹ The last two occurred within fifty years of each other and made enormous financial demands on the companies. Together they constituted a burden formidable enough, but between the two events the resources of the companies were constantly depleted by loans to the Crown and almost collapsed under the demands made on them between 1640 and 1643 by the Crown and Parliament. These circumstances were common to all the companies, though perhaps they bore more heavily on the Vintners, as the smallest and poorest of the great companies, but the latter also had a major conflict with the Crown over Wine Licences which brought it into ill-repute generally and made one of its members the most hated man in London.

The Stuart period opened well for the Company. In March 1604, soon after he came to the throne, James I confirmed Elizabeth's charter of 1567, the formal recognition necessary at the beginning of each new reign. In June 1611, the Master, John Bowssar, showed the Court of Assistants a bill enlarging the Company's charter, which had the king's own approval. The Court registered disapproval. It felt that the Master had taken unilateral action without the Court's consent and caused much malicious gossip and controversy thereby. Representatives of the Company had been summoned before the Mayor and Court of Aldermen and questioned on the subject. The Court of Assistants appreciated that the Master had done it for the good of the Company, but his conduct had been irregular and it felt he should therefore bear the cost and charges for the bill which

amounted to about £70. On 8 July the Company appointed a committee to see the Mayor and Aldermen about the objections to the charter raised by the French Merchants; these were not, as they might appear, Frenchmen trading in England, but a new corporation of London merchants whose main trade was with France. Since this trade could not fail to include wine, the Vintners had always eyed them warily. This was one of the first times their paths had crossed but it was certainly not to be the last. The French Merchants often acted in concert with an equivalent group of Spanish Merchants, particularly over an issue concerning wine.²

The proposed new charter confirmed the grant of Philip and Mary, making the Vintners a body corporate, but in addition, granted them the formal right to have a court of thirteen or more Assistants, which had to include the Master or his deputy and one of the Wardens. They were permitted to own land worth £200 per annum (the Company's rents at this period brought in over £400 per annum), and all rights granted by former charters were confirmed. All vintners were to have the right to sell wine without a licence in London, in its suburbs and within three miles of its walls and in all thoroughfare towns where couriers called 'posts' rode between London and Dover and London and Berwick, formerly granted only during the royal pleasure, but from henceforth in perpetuity. The Company was to 'oversee the selling, oylaging and filling of wines' in London and within three miles of it. It was the phrase 'oylaging and filling of wines' that the French merchants objected to. It was agreed that as they stood their sense was ambiguous and they should be omitted in the new charter. A committee was appointed by the Court of Aldermen, consisting among others of the Common Sergeant and two of the Common Pleaders, to compare the new charter with the old and see if anything it contained was repugnant to the charters of the city or if it threatened any authority of the Mayor or Aldermen in relation to the swearing of searchers of wine. Apart from the rejected phrase all the charter was accepted and, in November, the Recorder, Sir Henry Montague, was presented with a hogshead of 'especiall good Gascon wine' for his favour in getting the charter passed. It is, however, worth noting that the offending phrase 'oylaging and filling of wines' was not in fact omitted from it. On 13 February 1612 the Master presented the new charter to the Assistants, and the Court was so pleased it ordered that he was to be reimbursed his £70, despite their earlier order. The clerk, John Child, got £26.13s.4d. for his labours, the Lord Chancellor received

a butt of the best sack and various of his gentlemen and secretaries, gifts of wine or cash, and the king's solicitor, Sir Francis Bacon, £40.³

In addition to the new charter, James I, for a consideration of £180, confirmed the Company's right to own specific property. The grant of 1619 listed all the property, which was substantially that held in 1582 (see Appendix D), although it is difficult to identify precisely; the grant in most cases names only the parish in which the property was situated, whereas the Vintners normally described it by street or alley. It also gives the names of all the tenants occupying each house and all the inmates of the almshouses.⁴ Despite these encouraging signs of royal favour, things were not going particularly well for the Vintners in other quarters. On one front they were in trouble over taverns and on another over the purchase of wines.

In 1612 both the Court of Assistants and the Court of Common Council of the city were concerned over the increasing number of taverns in London. Both set up committees to look into the problem, and the Vintners ordered a general view of all taverns in the city and within three miles of it, to ascertain how many there were, by what sign they were known, to which Company the taverner belonged and how many journeymen and apprentices he kept. The outcome was that the Company drew up new ordinances restraining both the numbers of new taverns and the numbers of apprentices. These they presented to the Court of Aldermen for approval, and a committee visited the Mayor (with a gift of wine of his own choice) to gain his favour. The Lord Chancellor also received a butt of sack and the Lord Privy Seal a 'piece' (the equivalent of a butt) of canary. Unfortunately neither the Vintners' court book nor ordinance book, nor the Aldermen's Repertory contain a copy of these ordinances. Whatever they were, however, they were not conspicuously successful, despite the fact that several retailers from other companies appeared at the Hall to swear their acceptance of them. By 1620 a committee of the Court of Aldermen was preparing to call the Master and Wardens of the Vintners before them to consider some course for redressing the excess number of taverns and restraining the number of apprentices to be hereafter accepted by the Company.⁵

Legitimate and law-abiding retailers of wines had other troubles to concern them. 1614 saw the first battle in a long campaign over Sunday opening hours. The opening shot took the Company apparently by surprise. In November of that year it sent a deputation to the Mayor to obtain an explanation for his recent outrageous proclamation forbidding

taverns to receive any guests at all on the Sabbath. The use of the very word Sabbath indicates the religious views of those who opposed all opening on Sunday. In the following April a deputation was forced to see the Mayor on behalf of Company members who had ignored the precept and found themselves consequently imprisoned. The Company had no alternative but to accept the Mayoral order and in December 1615 it drew up its own scale of fines for those who retailed on the Sabbath; 6s.8d. for the first offence, 13s.4d. for the second, 20s. for the third and 40s. for each subsequent offence. At some point early in 1618 the total ban on Sunday opening seems to have been relaxed somewhat, since a petition was sent to the Mayor asking for notification of which hours on the Sabbath tavern-keepers were not allowed to open. This was also the first time the Company had to complain about 'those who take it upon themselves to regulate observance of the Sabbath'. Puritans apparently did not approve of the lessening of restrictions. In June 1618 it was laid down quite plainly by the Court that taverns need only close during the time of divine service or public sermon, and that if any taverner or his guests were molested by anyone trying to observe the Sabbath more strictly, if they were sure of his identity they might sue him and the Company would bear the legal charges. This did not repress the fury of the reformers and six months later the Company's representatives were pressing Sir Thomas Howe for his direction to subdue the 'pretended reformers' and seeking the favour of the Bishop of London, John King. On July 1619, Sir Henry Martin, chancellor to the Bishop, was approached by a deputation and asked if some action might be taken to repress the 'fury of the busy reformers', and if they thought he would do anything, the deputation was authorised to reward him. Martin probably was of assistance, because when, in 1623, a petition to prohibit the retail of wine at all on Sundays reached the Court, they immediately saw Sir Henry about it, and there, for a while, the issue rested.⁶

One restriction that the retailers welcomed was that on gaming. In May 1618 Letters Patent were granted to Sir Thomas Cornwallis and his son for the restraint of gaming and the licensing of play, which meant, in effect, that any taverner who wished to provide facilities for his guests to gamble had to take out a special licence from the Cornwallises to do so – at a price. Their assignee, Mr. Sturgis, demanded that the Vintners decide which taverns they wished to be licensed before it was declared illegal in all the rest. At a subsequent general meeting of retailers, however, this money-making project was thwarted when they unanimously decided

that common gaming in taverns should be suppressed, and apparently nobody appeared at all interested in applying for a licence.⁷

II

The struggle over wine with the French and Spanish merchants was much less easily resolved. The basic point at issue was the merchants' determination to obtain a certain market from the retailers. In the great wine trading days of the Vintners' Company this had never been a bone of contention since there was no rigid dividing line between merchants and retailers. Now, with the Company largely consisting of retailers, and the Corporation of French Merchants being exclusively wholesalers, the opportunities for ill-feeling were legion. The first came in April 1612. At that date the Governor and others of the Company of French Merchants requested the Vintners' Court of Assistants to relieve them of the burden of great quantities of wine. The Court decided that the Master should exhort the retailers to buy as much and as quickly as they conveniently could, both to encourage the merchants and to avoid retailing at low prices. At a general meeting, which included retailers from the outcompanies, it was agreed to do so. This made economic sense to the retailers. They obviously preferred buying from London merchants rather than strangers or aliens, and for the market to be flooded with cheap French wine the merchants could not dispose of, would benefit nobody. The French merchants, however, wanted more. They wanted to force the Vintners into an undertaking to purchase a specific amount of wine each year. To this end they took legal action in the spring of 1613. The Vintners retained counsel for their defence in the cause and sent copies of the brief to the Lord Chancellor, Lord Northampton and Lord Zouche. In August the Court was informed that the French merchants intended to obtain a proclamation to prohibit the importing of French wines in any year before 1 December; this they hoped would enable them to dispose of any old wine on their hands before the arrival of the new vintage. The Court appointed a committee to see the Chancellor and Lord Privy Seal to obtain their favour in not granting the proclamation until the Vintners' views had at least been heard, and meanwhile another committee was appointed to discover from each tavern-keeper how much French wine he had and if it was enough to last him until Christmas. Armed with this information the Company's representatives presented themselves to the Privy Council.⁸

In January 1615 the retail price of French was limited to 7d. per quart in view of the quantity already in the city and likely to be brought in during the rest of the year. The Privy Council had taken no positive action over the French merchants' petition and had finally referred it to the Mayor and Aldermen. The latter were determined that the matter could be settled amicably by the two companies. The result is not clear but the banning of imports before 1 December seems to have been dropped. The original point at issue was not resolved, and every time the merchants had a surplus of wine on their hands, they petitioned the Privy Council to press the Vintners to buy it at a reasonable price. The bulk was sometimes considerable. In March 1619 they wanted the tavern-keepers to buy 1,500 tuns in a month. Generally speaking the Vintners did what they could to oblige. A meeting of all retailers was summoned, the names of merchants with wine to sell was read out and a show of hands indicated which retailers were willing to buy. On that particular occasion, however, the retailers had little need of more wine and the French merchants were not satisfied. They had the support of the king's officials, because until the wine was sold, the duty on it was not paid to the Crown. The Lord Chancellor therefore ordered the Vintners to buy the remaining 1,272 tuns unsold and the retailers had to furnish details of all the French wines they had bought between December and 10 March, from whom and at what price, and later they had to make a similar return for the period 11 March to 7 April. At an agreed meeting between twelve of the vintners and twelve French merchants the matter was finally settled by an assessment among the retailers, which allocated how much wine each was to take.⁹

The French merchants were not the only source from which the Vintners were obliged to buy wine whether or not they required it. In October 1619 they received a visit from officers of the Board of Green Cloth, who wished to dispose of some Gascon wine at Leadenhall belonging to the king. The company expressed its willingness to view the wines – it could hardly do otherwise – but it pointed out to officers the great quantities of wine they currently had left on their hands, which they had been forced to buy earlier in the year. Eventually the Vintners agreed to take it at £18 per tun and apportion it amongst their members.

Compulsory purchase of royal wine was not the only obligation the Crown laid upon the Company, for James I, like his predecessors, saw wine as a source of revenue. Duties and imposts had always been levied on wine and until 1620 James refrained from increasing them. In that year,

however, following the outbreak of the Thirty Year War in Germany James felt compelled to aid his son-in-law, the Elector Palatine.¹⁰ To help pay for this aid he doubled the duty on wine imposing an extra 40s.od. per tun. It was hardly surprising that this caused so much protest, both from the French and Spanish merchants and from the retailers, and a considerable reluctance to pay. In January 1622, after a year of great depression in the wine trade, the Master of the Rolls ordered that representatives of the merchants meet representatives of the Vintners in order to find the 'best ways of removing the difficulties now insisted upon, so that both submit themselves to his Majesty's pleasure in the business'. At the meeting the merchants sought to relieve the pressure on themselves by offering the Vintners all their wines both in hand and to come in the next four months at a price that would enable the latter to make a reasonable profit. They themselves, with the cash in hand, of course, would be able to pay off their backlog of duty. The Vintners, not unnaturally, thought this a trifle unreasonable without some sort of limit on the amount of wine, and a proviso as to its quality. The merchants also thought it would be a good idea if a few of the wealthier vintners bought all the wine and recouped themselves in stages from the retailers. This piece of impertinence was refused outright, but the general assembly of retailers did agree to take the wines after it was agreed with the authorities that they should be permitted to raise the retail price of wine by 1d. per quart. Despite this, the Privy Council was still complaining in June that the merchants were delaying to pay their imposts until the wine was bought from them, and it ordered the Master to urge the retailers to buy as much as they could.

Later in 1622 the new duty was reduced by half, and in February 1625 the Mayor planned therefore to reduce the retail price by 1d. per quart, whereupon the Company immediately despatched representatives to him to point out that although the king had abated the extra duty he had not removed all of it, and the merchants had for the most part retained the high wholesale prices so that the retailers could not afford to lower theirs. In May the Master was forced to summon the retailers and inform them that the Privy Council had ordered the retail price to be lowered by 1d. There was a storm of protest from the members because of the high wholesale price they had been compelled to pay and they begged the court to petition the Privy Council to let the old price stand. The petition was refused. Two months later, however, rumour reached them via several French merchants, that the Lord Treasurer had agreed to raise the

price again. A deputation to him confirmed that this was so and acquired an order to that effect from the full Privy Council.¹¹

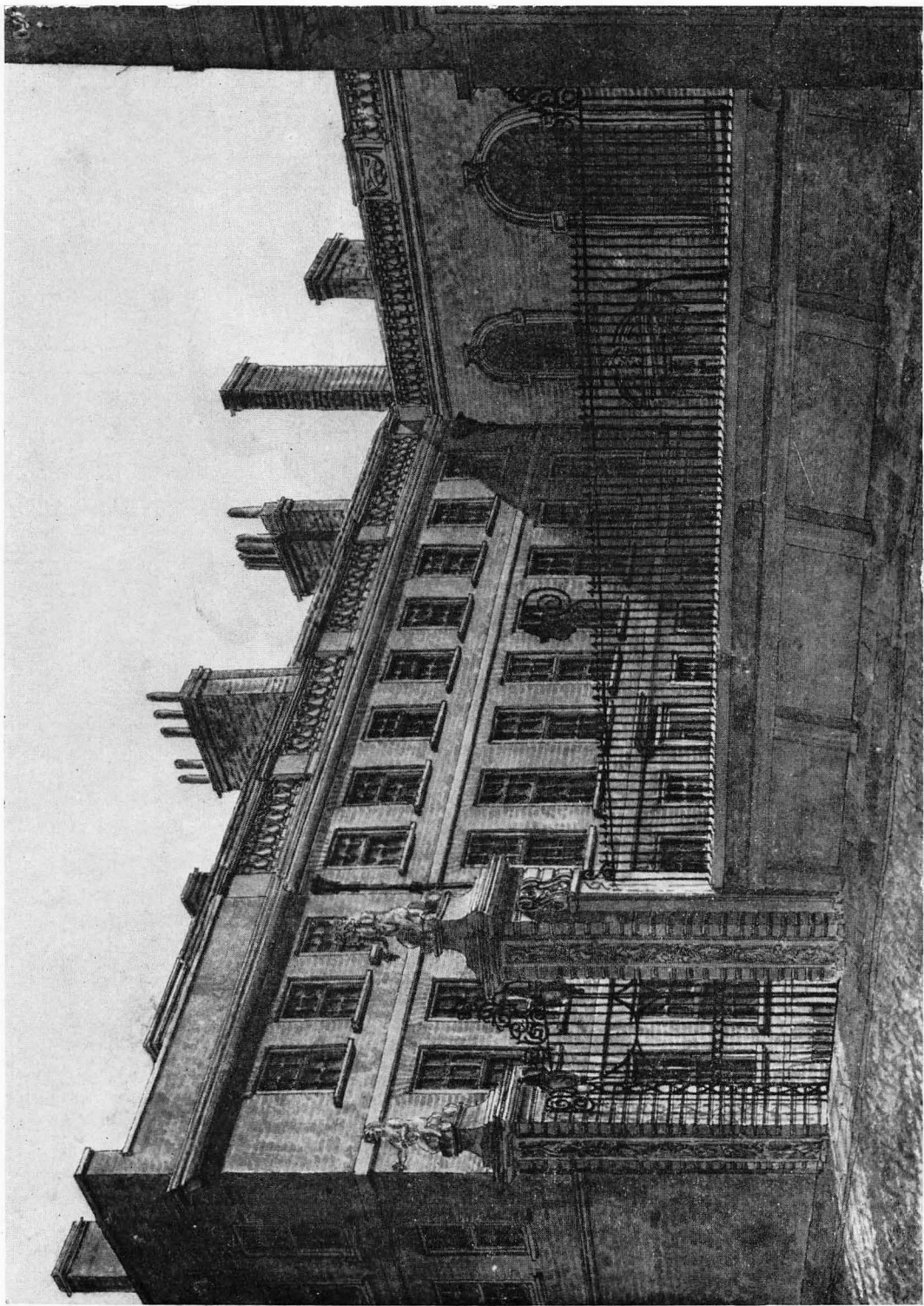
The promised abolition of the new tax was still awaited in 1624 when James I reluctantly entered a war with Spain. This caused great damage to the wine trade, English shipping became a prey of Spain and her allies, and it abolished any hope of James remitting the tax. It was maintained without parliamentary consent and there was strong opposition to it in the Commons. In debate, Sir Edwin Sandys declared that the impost was contrary to the king's covenant with the farmers of customs and was harshly enforced by him to the ruin of most of the merchants, who compared their sufferings under him to those of the Israelites under their taskmasters. When both merchants and retailers discovered that what had been levied as a temporary war measure was enabling the king to send his daughter, now Queen of Bohemia, a regular income, not even the affection in which Elizabeth was generally held prevented both groups from resisting by all possible means a duty they considered unfair, as well as illegal. In June 1624 a friend in London wrote to Sir Dudley Carleton that 'the merchants who should pay the imposition in wines assigned to the Queen of Bohemia are still in rebellion, but must come round in a few days, whether they will or not'. In spite of all the opposition, James, who was nothing if not stubborn and desperately in need of the money, maintained the impost. His only concession was to remit the duty for individual merchants.¹²

When he succeeded his father in 1625 Charles I continued to demand the impost and the Vintners continued hostile. Simon considers they had little grounds, since they merely passed the cost on to the consumer after James I abolished retail wine price fixing. This may have been true outside London (where incidentally the duty was only 13s.4d., and not 20s.0d.) but it is quite clear from Company records that in London the Mayor still had the power to fix retail prices and used it, and Charles I certainly re-introduced price fixing. Vintners petitioned the Privy Council in 1627 to the effect that the duty was ruining them and could no longer be borne. The petition was summarily dismissed and it was not until 1634 that the additional duty was finally removed. Another aspect of the war which bore heavily on the Company was the taking of large quantities of French and Spanish wines in captured French ships. These prize wines were usually sold direct to the consumer at low prices and caused much disturbance in the trade. The dangers were recognised very quickly by the Vintners. In July 1627 the retailers were called to a general meeting to elect

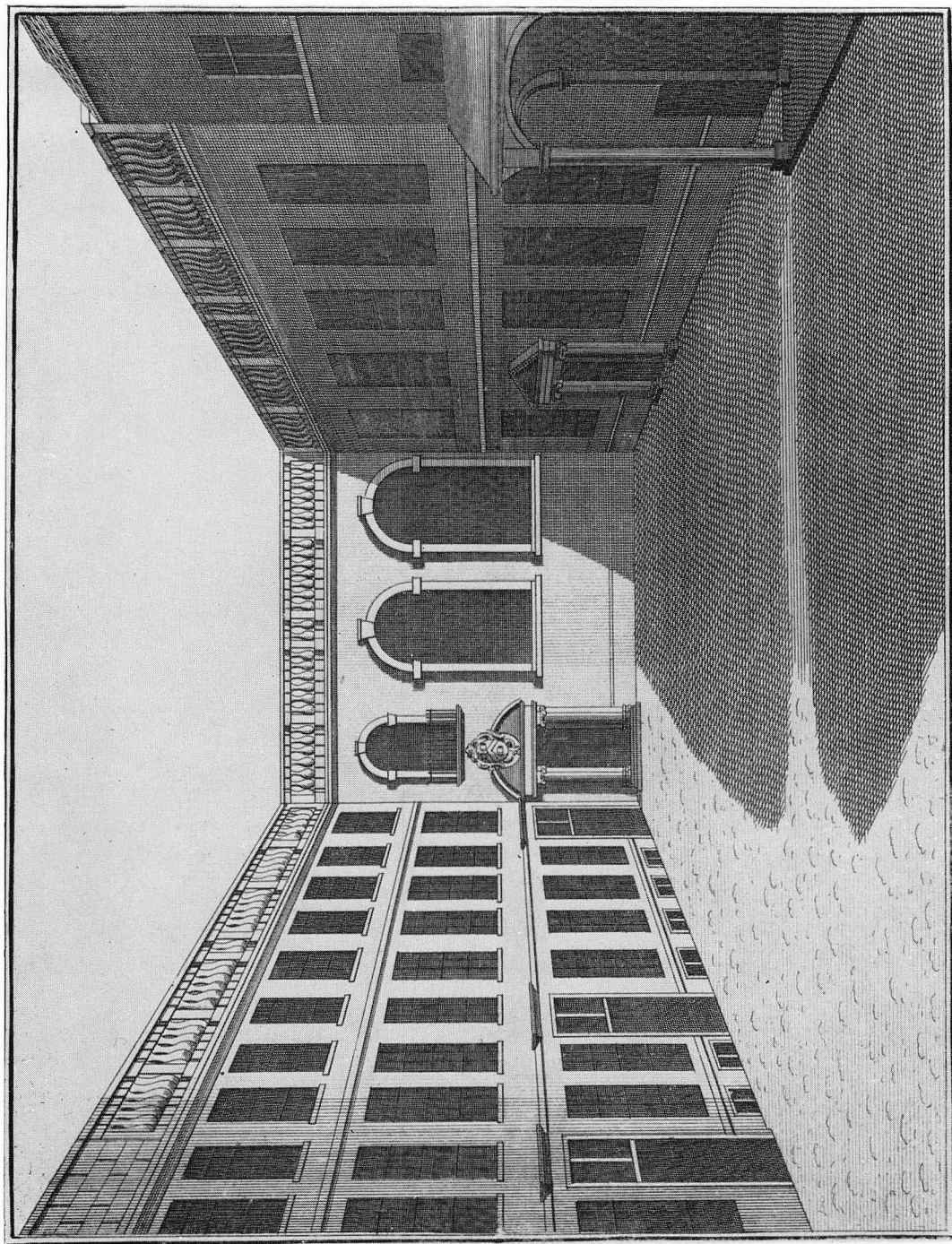
a committee to deal with the Privy Council over viewing and buying the king's prize wines. The retailers agreed to abide by any contract entered into by the committee, provided it did not agree to take more than 500 tuns or pay more than £12 per tun for it. This attempt to buy up the bulk of the prize wines failed and the Company came to regret it bitterly. More prize wine continued to arrive and it became cheaper as it became more plentiful. In May 1629 a Company deputation went to the Privy Council with their answer to a request to purchase 3,000 tuns of French prize wine. They already had 2,000 tuns bought at dearer rates remaining on their hands and could therefore only take 500 tuns immediately and the rest as soon as possible. The deputation begged for a prohibition on imports until all the wine already in this country could be disposed of. Rather to their surprise, the Privy Council proved sympathetic and banned all imports from July 1629 until the following February and after that, only imports in English ships were permitted to enter the country.¹³

The struggle with the French merchants had continued throughout the 1620s. In 1624 there was some suggestion that either a bill should be presented to Parliament for the dissolution of the French Corporation, or alternatively that the Vintners should join the persons proposing a bill for free trade if it extended as far as the French monopoly. In 1627 the Company of French Merchants brought a suit against Roland Wilson, a member of the Vintners' Company, over some French wines he had ventured to get. A certain proportion of the Company's members had always imported wine wholesale and the Company deeply resented this attempt by the French merchants to enforce a monopoly which had once been the Vintners' own. In fact the French merchants tacitly admitted they were in the wrong by releasing Wilson's wines the day before that appointed for the Lord Treasurer to hear the case. Despite outbreaks of bad feeling, the two companies could act amicably together over matters that concerned the wellbeing of both. Early in 1629 the French merchants suggested to the Vintners that they should join them in preferring a bill to Parliament banning the import of any wine at all that was 'mixed, falsified or deceitfully compounded'. Not only did the Vintners accept, they also conferred a few months later with some French merchants over the problem of vintners who proposed to sell wine at prices below those fixed by the Privy Council, and also over an order recently made by the Court of Aldermen that some counterfeit Rhenish wine found in some retail premises be drawn publicly through the streets to Guildhall. Both companies entreated the Mayor and Aldermen to find some other course

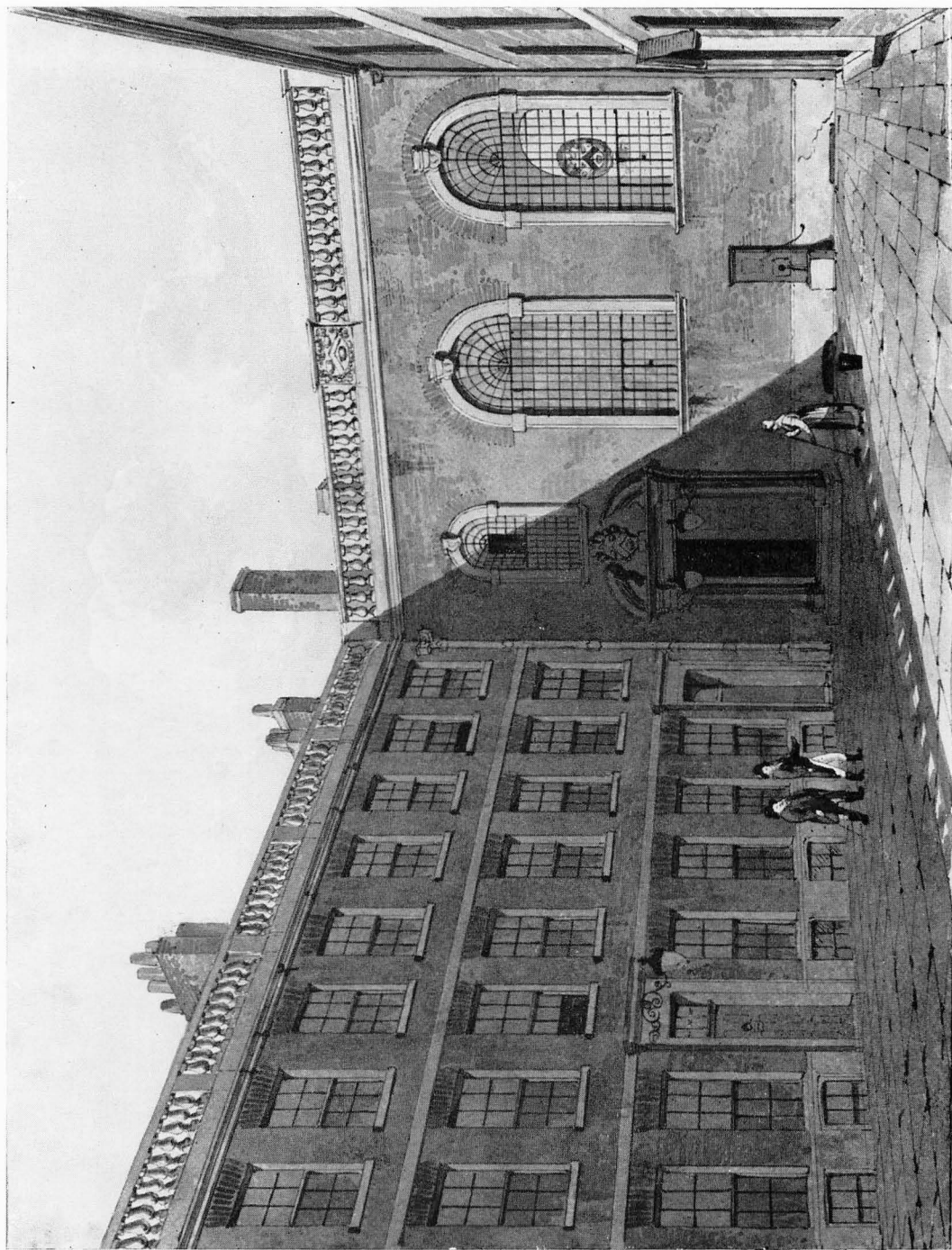
1. Watercolour by
Wilson of Vintners'
Hall, c.1750.

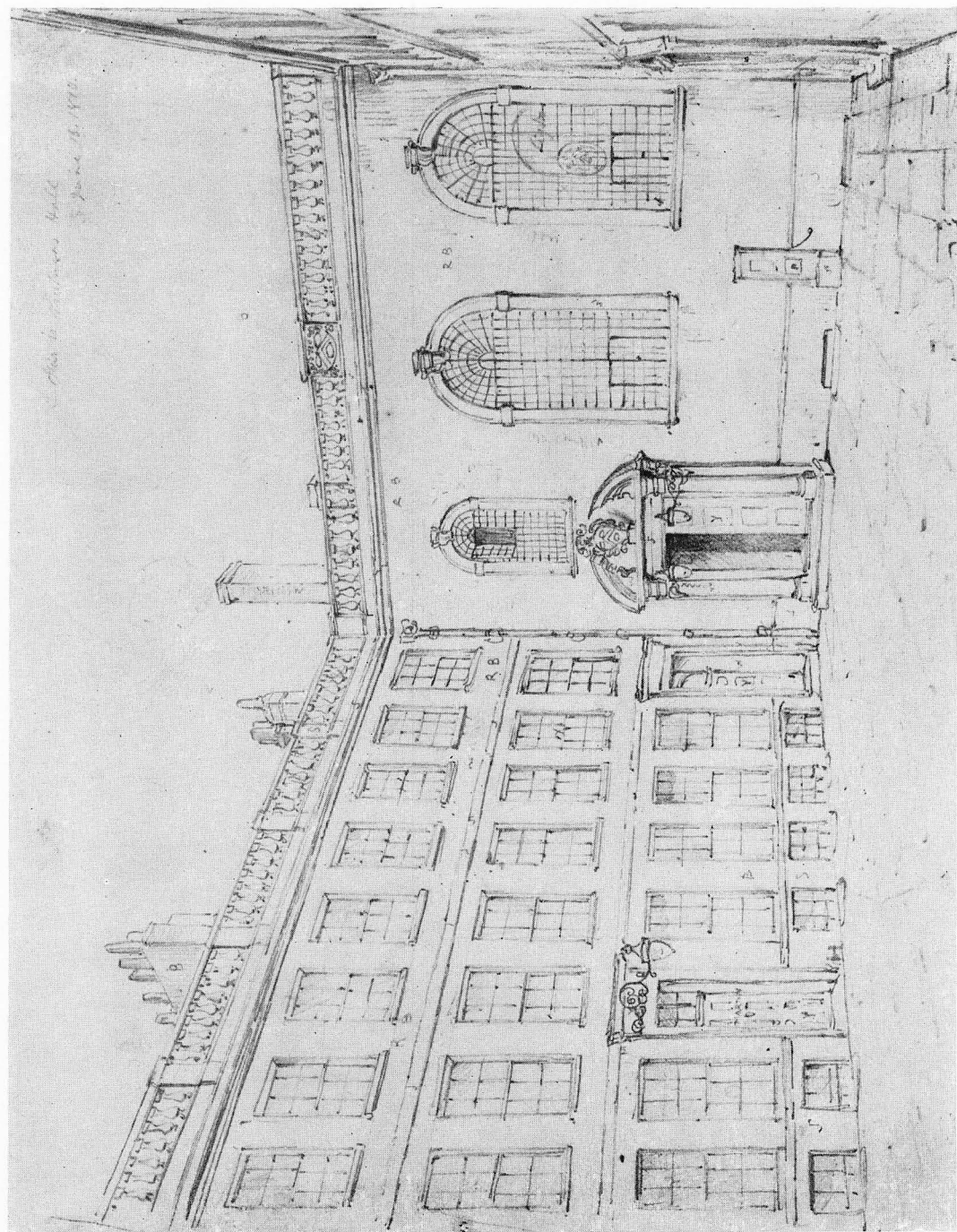


2. Engraving by Cole of
the Courtyard of Vintners'
Hall, c.1754.



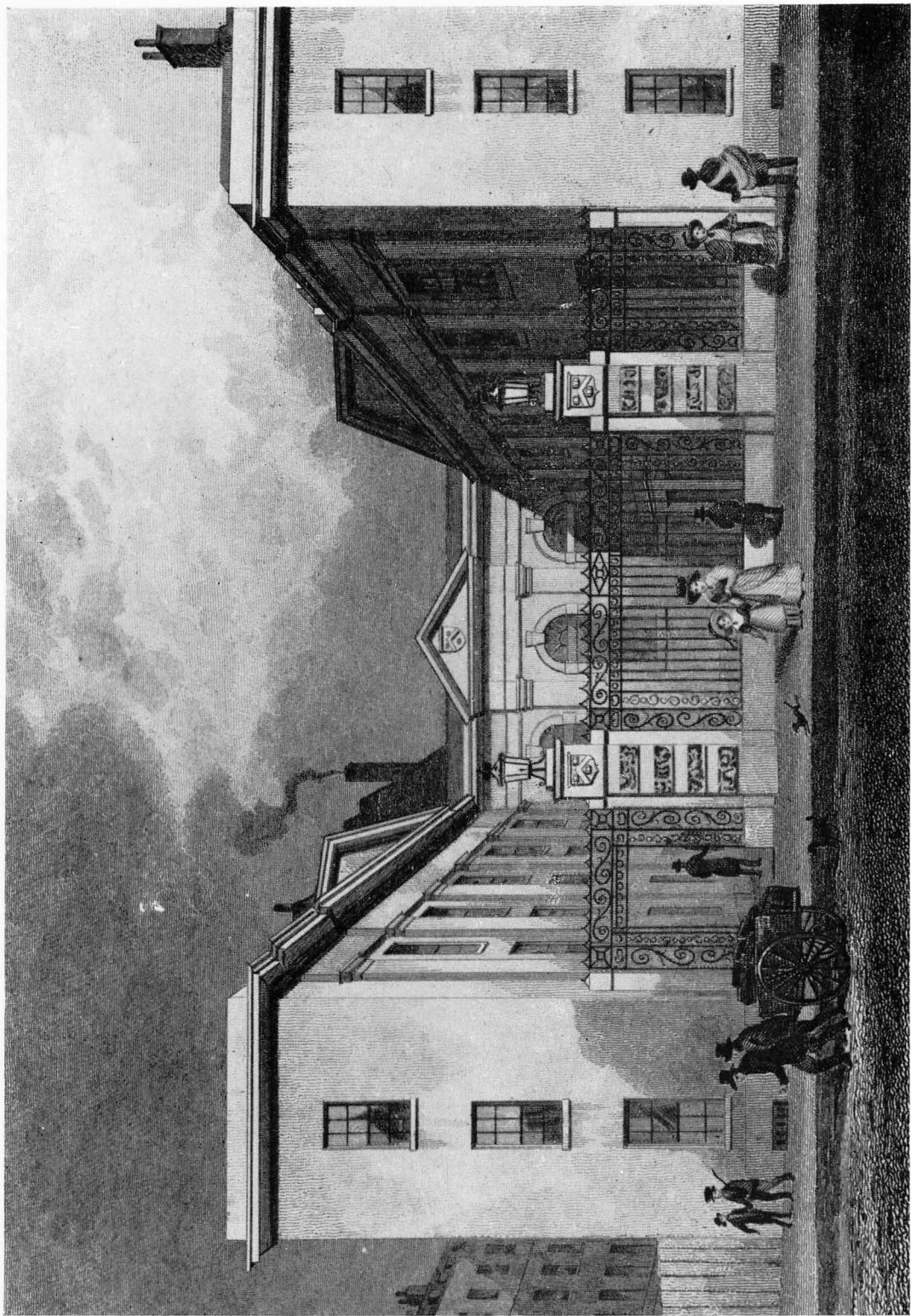
3. Watercolour by
G. Shepherd of Vintners'
Hall, 1810.





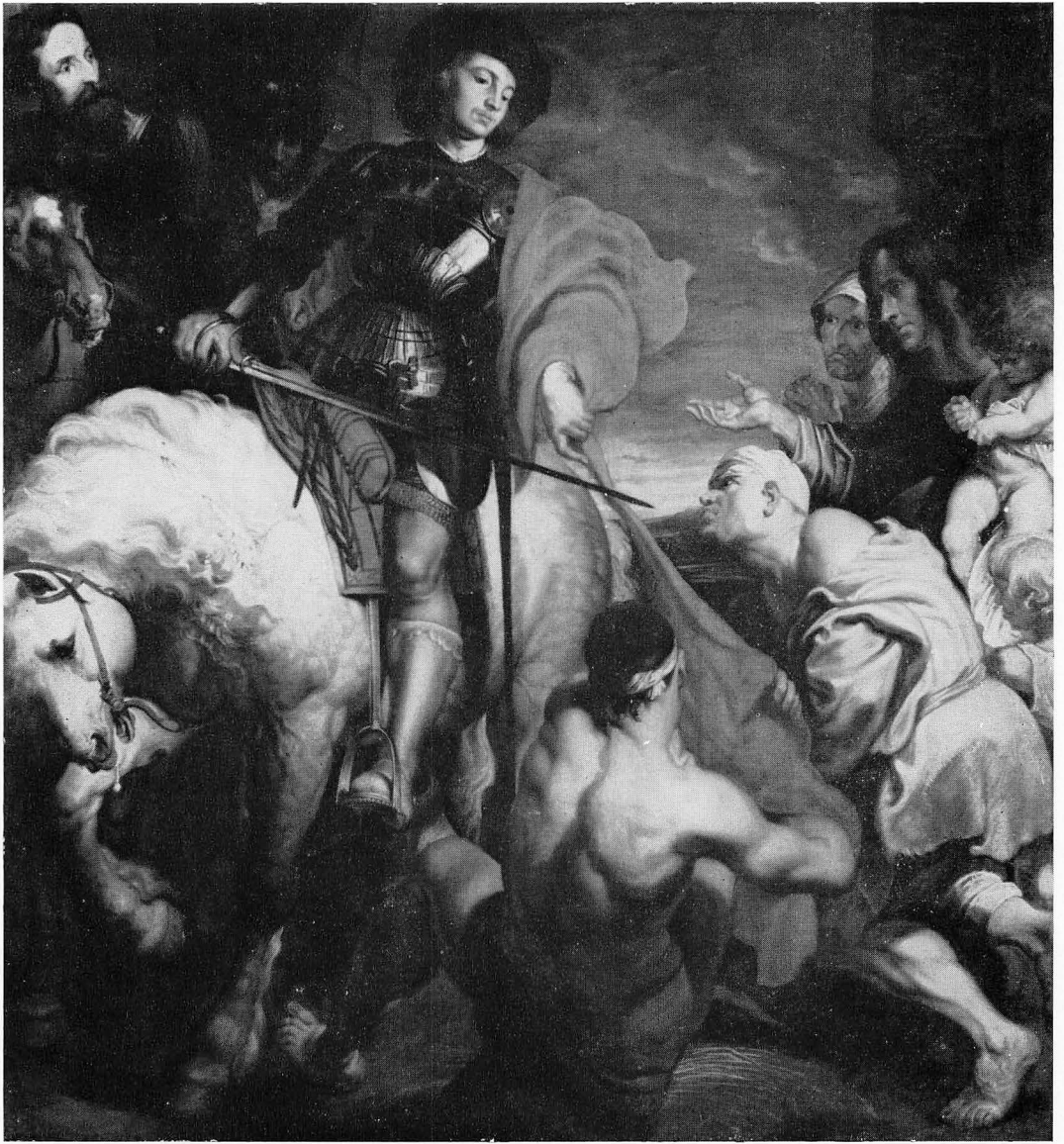
4. Detailed pencil drawing by G. Shepherd of Vintners' Hall made in preparation for his watercolour, 1810.

5. Engraving
by Acon of
drawing by
T. H. Shepherd
of Vintners',
Hall, c.1822.

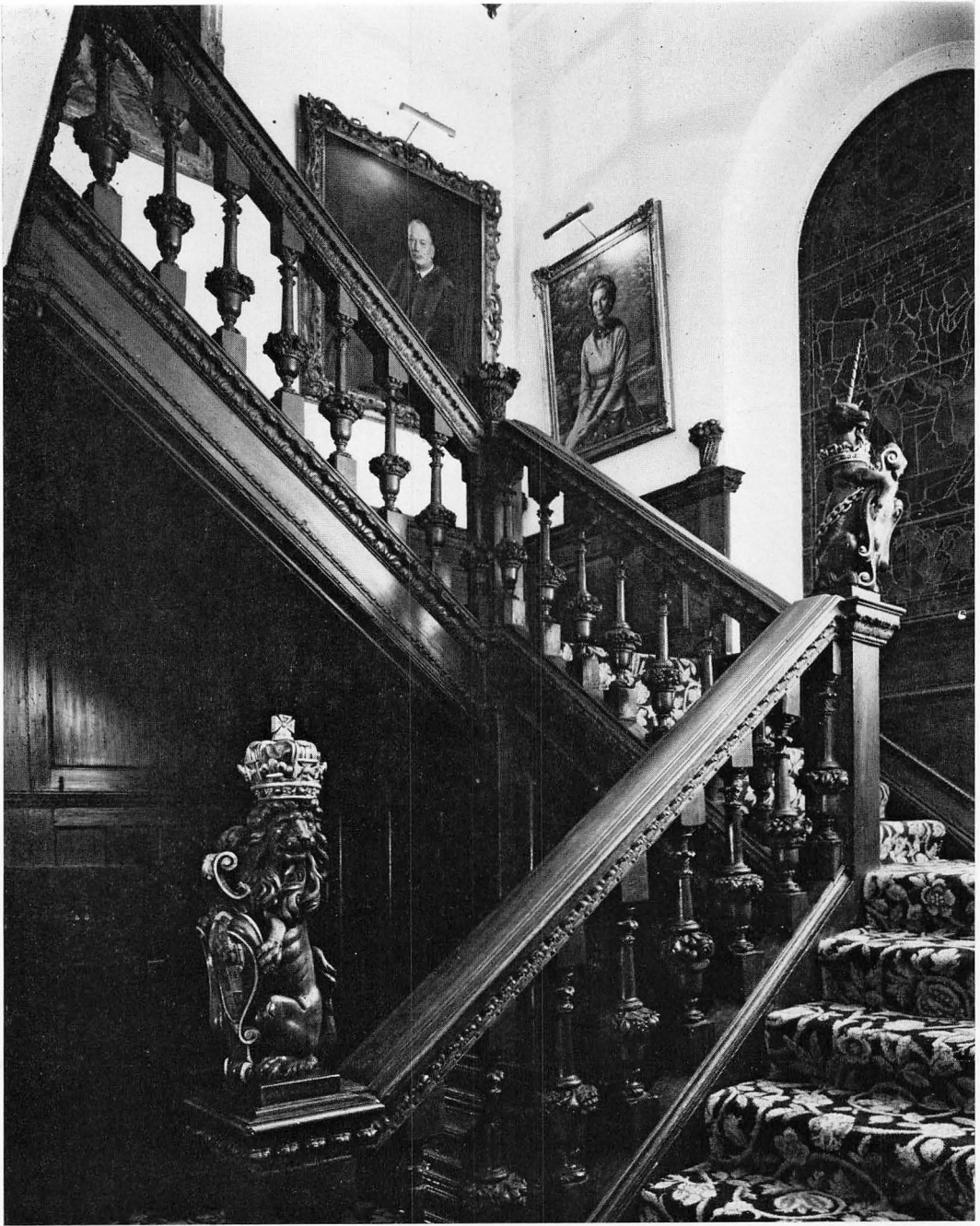


6. The Court Room at
Vintners' Hall.

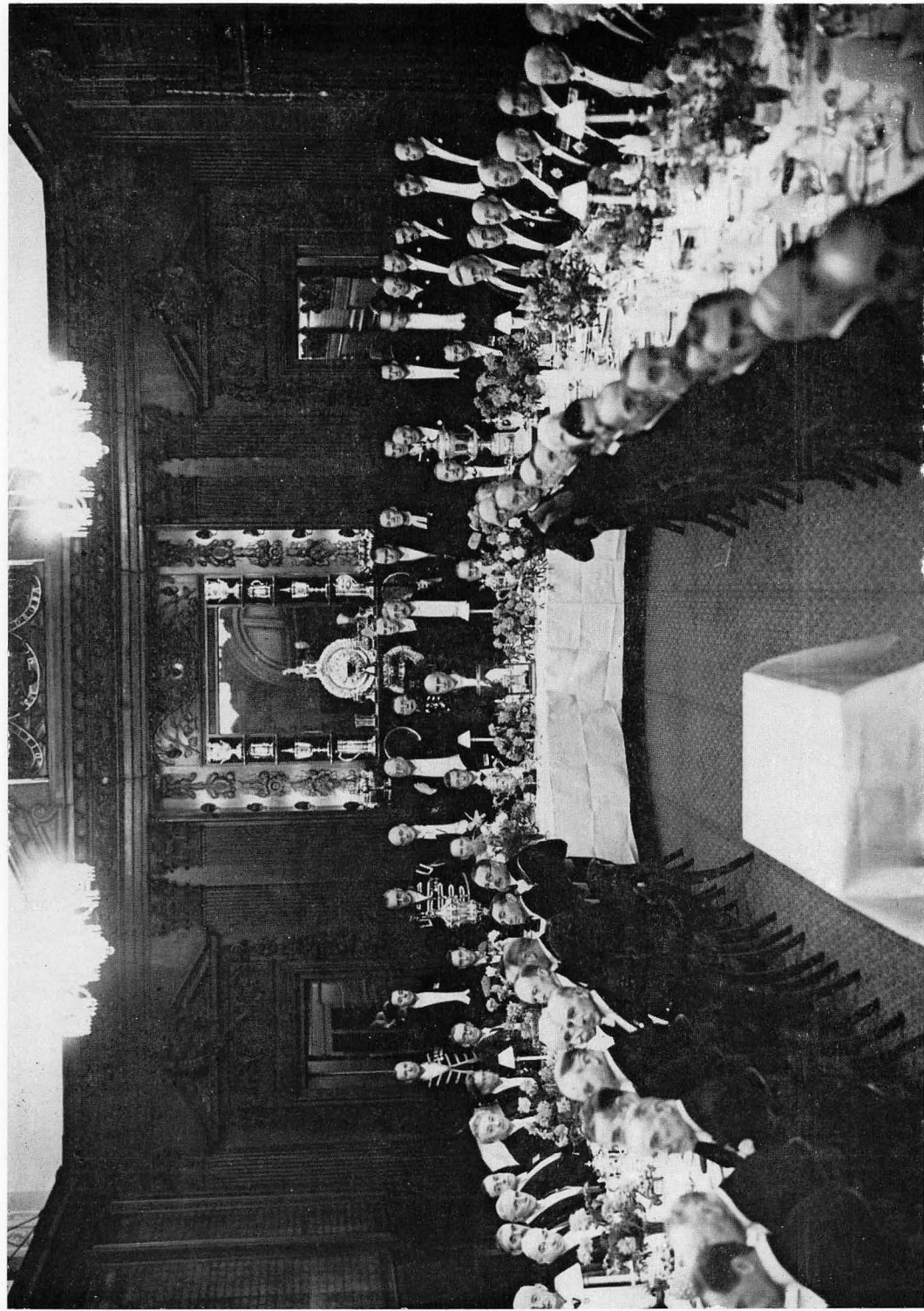




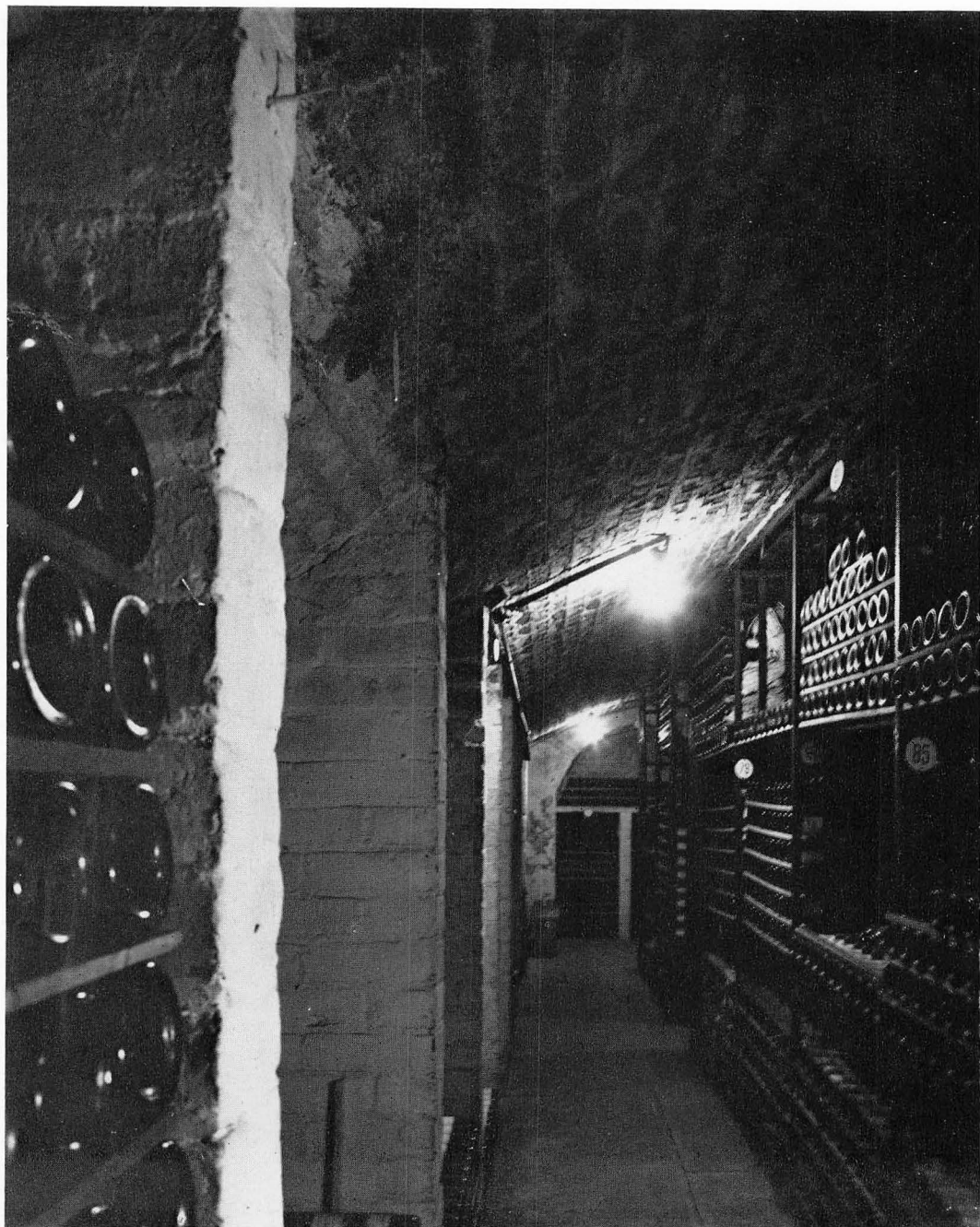
7. Picture of St. Martin dividing his cloak with the beggar, after Van Dyck, now hanging in the Court Room. In the Company's possession since the 17th century.



8. The Staircase at Vintners' Hall.



9. The Banqueting
Hall on the
occasion of the
Four Princes'
Dinner, 1935.



10. The Wine Cellar today showing the medieval vaults which are all that remain of the original Company Hall.

A
Dialogue or accidental discourse
Betwixt Mr. Alderman *Abell*, and *Richard*
Kilvert, the two maine Projectors for Wine,
and also Aldermans *Abels* wife, &c.

Contayning their first manner of their acquaintance, how
they began to contrive the Patent it selfe, how they
obrayned it, and who drew the patent.

*Also in what state they now stand in, and how they accuse and rail'e
at each other with invective speeches, &c.*

With the manner and fashion how Projectors and P.tentees
have rod a Tilting in a Parlaмент time, &c.



Printed also in the same yeare of grace. 1641.

14. Watercolour
by T. H.
Shepherd of
the Company's
Alms-houses in
the Mile End
Road, rebuilt in
1802.



15. The installation procession
of H.R.H. The Duke of
Gloucester as Master, 1953, led
by the Company's Wine Porters
with the Beadle and Swan Marker.



16. Modern swan
upping showing the
Dyers' Company
swan uppers.



of punishment, since such public disgrace would ruin the credit of all retailers of wine.

In December 1629, not long after this amicable co-operation, the two companies fell out again when the Privy Council ordered that the Vintners give priority of purchase to wines brought over by English merchants. This, in effect, meant the merchants of the French Company. The Vintners reacted with a strongly worded petition to the Council. They pointed out that to do so would restrain freedom of trade, which was beneficial, and lead to a monopoly of wine sales. Since the French merchants were incorporated, French wines had always been sold at the same high prices whether the French wine harvest had been good or bad, and wine was plentiful or scarce, and they had only been forced to moderate their prices somewhat because of good wine brought in by Scots, Irish or merchant strangers, and sold at reasonable prices. If the French merchants were given priority the Scots and others would be driven out of business and English subjects would find the price of their wine rising steadily. In addition, the Vintners feared that if they did not have a free market in which to purchase their retail stocks they would find that some of the French merchants would sell to their factors, or to coopers, and the Vintners would be forced to buy from them second-hand. They would also be forced to carry on buying old wines the merchants had in stock and sell at low prices long after they could have bought new wine elsewhere and sold it at high prices. This cogency on the Vintners' part seems to have convinced the Council, since nothing further was heard on the subject.¹⁴ The struggle with the French merchants was not over by any means, but for a time it lay dormant.

III

In 1627 the Vintners' Company was involved in one of the constitutional struggles between the Crown and its subjects, which occurred at intervals before the outbreak of the Civil War. Seventeenth century historians, particularly those with royalist tendencies, often regarded the city of London as the instigator of the troubles which led to the war. In fact, London probably contained as many interest groups as anywhere else in the country and rarely spoke with a single voice. In 1627 Charles I was forced to resort to a forced loan to prop up his shaky finances and even after judges had attacked its legality, London accepted it, and the Court of

Aldermen agreed to subscribe personally and submit a list of those substantial men in their wards who would contribute, and more invidiously, another of those who refused. Protest against the Crown was loudest from those who opposed Charles I for political rather than religious reasons and who took over the city government once the war had actually broken out. Some of their leaders who refused to pay were imprisoned. The Crown and the Corporation of London in December 1627 came to an agreement known as the Royal Contract. By it, Charles I arranged to repay loans made to his father in 1617 and to himself in 1625 and borrow a further £120,000, half of it to be paid within ten days. The whole of the debts were to be repaid to the city by the sale of Crown lands at twenty-eight years' purchase amounting to an annual value of £12,496. As was usual, the Corporation then turned to the livery companies to raise the first £60,000, and the companies accepted the obligation. The city, in accepting the Royal Contract, was doing its best to ensure that the citizens were repaid for past loans, and both it and the companies were not mindful of the fact that it was from the Crown that their privileges sprang.¹⁵

There was, however, considerable opposition to the Mayor's precept from some of the smaller, more radical companies and the officers of the Founders', Glaziers', Plumbers' and Joiners' Companies, and twenty or thirty members of the Sadlers' Company, including its Master and Wardens, were committed to Newgate for not using their best endeavours to raise their share of the loan from their members. What surprised the city government rather more was to find opposition within one of the twelve great companies. The assessment for the Vintners' Company was £3,120, and at a general meeting of the Company's members the question of whether they might refuse or avoid payment was one of the first raised. Although it was agreed by a majority of the Court that it should be paid, a minority opposed it. That this fact is recorded is unusual in itself, for the court books normally only reflect the final decision of the Court on any matter. It was decided that the Company should borrow the money on the Company's credit rather than assess its members. This was clearly an attempt to muffle opposition to the loan and avoid a confrontation, but it failed because it could not find sufficient creditors. The most able men in the Company who had not lent voluntarily were informed that they would be assessed for sums between £25 and £100. Six of the sixty-two thus assessed refused to pay and on 11 January, by order of the Mayor and Aldermen, Nicholas

Clegate, Ralph Moore, Alexander Child, Michael Gardiner, Philip Travis and Cordell Hammond found themselves in Newgate. They were certainly not the only members of the Company who opposed the loan, but not all men are prepared to face imprisonment for their beliefs. Having opposed their Company's authority to raise money by such assessment, the Master and Wardens had no alternative but to hand them over to the higher authority of the city. Repeated attempts at persuasion failed to get the six to submit and pay the levy.

The principle at issue was not so much the city's right to make a loan to the Crown, but its power to force private citizens to contribute to such a loan. In this test case, a good deal of mayoral authority, and hence the Mayor's usefulness to the Crown in financial matters, was at stake. When the Vintners' case reached the notice of the Privy Council, it approved the Mayor's action and took the case into its own jurisdiction. The Vintners continued for some time in their refusal to submit, but by 20 March, from the last entry in the Vintners' court book referring to the affair, it appears that five had agreed to pay their assessment and only Clegate still held out. On 26 March Clegate petitioned the newly-summoned Parliament for relief. The petition was passed to the Committee of Grievances and the case was given very serious consideration. The Vintners spent money freely on legal representation, hiring two counsel as well as two customary legal advisers. The committee eventually found that Clegate had been unlawfully imprisoned and the Crown was petitioned for his release. The constitutional result of his case was that citizens could not be imprisoned for refusing to contribute to a loan to the Crown that had not been authorised by Parliament. It did not prevent the city making a loan to the Crown or the livery companies from asking their members to contribute. It is reassuring to note that relations between the Company and Clegate and his rebels seem to have been unimpaired, since all six went on to become Wardens of the Company. The only question that remains is, why was it members of the Vintners' Company who chose to uphold a constitutional principle in defiance of their Company and the city? It must be remembered that smaller companies did rebel but the Vintners' significance lay in its being the only one of the twelve to have such trouble with its members. No categorical answer can possibly be attempted but one explanation may lie in the fact that even the wealthier and more influential vintners were likely to be working taverners and this may perhaps explain parliamentary views closer to members of the lesser companies than the rich merchants of the great companies.¹⁶

After this Parliament's dissolution, Charles I contrived to rule for more than a decade without calling another. To a large extent during this period he had the support of the city authorities. Numbers of Aldermen owed something to royal favour or had friends and relations at Court. This is reflected in the attitudes of the major livery companies, where the Courts of Assistants seem to have shown Charles little opposition. They accepted the Common Council's decision to forfeit the Irish Estates in return for the grant of a municipal charter in 1637, although this did not bring any direct benefit to the companies and they lost their entire investment in Ireland. Most companies contributed to Archbishop Laud's scheme to rebuild St. Paul's Cathedral, thus endorsing the Crown's religious policy as well as its political one. The Vintners' Court noted that despite their Company's present indebted state 'for such religious pious and necessary work' it was right to give £100.¹⁷ It was against this general city background of qualified acceptance of Charles I's personal government that one of the most dramatic parts of the Vintners' history was played out.

Although the question of the wine monopoly is often dealt with as an isolated incident, justice cannot be done to the Company without tracing its personal relations with Charles I further back. The train of events seems to have a beginning on 24 May 1633 when the Master and Wardens received a letter under Charles' personal signet requiring the Company to grant a reversion of its clerkship to one Herbert Fynch. Much as this must have taken the Court aback, it was agreed with dignity to send a deputation to Mr. Secretary Windibank to inform him that the Company had never granted such a reversion and they humbly desired to continue in that fashion. However, when the place became void, the king's letter would be remembered and Fynch, if he were still living, would be given preference. This was a snub, but a delicate one, calculated to give as little offence as possible while maintaining the Company's independence. The king's demand was one of a number of attempts made by him at this period to interfere in the internal running of the livery companies; other companies received similar letters. His next move was dictated only by his need to raise money without recourse to Parliament. Later that same year, he asked the Vintners to pay £4 per tun duty on all imported wine, thus adding 20s. to what they were already paying. The Company refused. As a direct retaliation for this defiance the Court of Star Chamber issued a decree in November 1633 forbidding vintners to sell any victuals except bread in their taverns, denying them a practice they had exercised time out of mind. The Company immediately engaged legal counsel to

draw up a petition for mitigation of the decree and despatched gifts of wine to those who might prove friendly in high places. Nothing appeared to come of this petition and in May 1634 the Company drew up another, begging the king to at least allow them to sell one type of victual. This produced the same result, but undeterred, they presented a third petition in November of the same year. This one was in four parts, requesting that Company members might be permitted to dress and sell victuals and sell tobacco, to have redress against intruders in the wine trade who forestalled, and that there might be restraint in the granting of retail wine licences. This time the Company received a response.

In February 1635 the Court was told that the king graciously agreed to mitigate the decree, but demanded a £6,000 loan 'to furnish his present occasion'. How and when this large sum was to be reimbursed was not divulged. At a general meeting next day the members agreed unanimously to pay the sums assessed on them to raise half the sum, the other half being raised by individuals. They accepted that the right to victual would not extend to pheasants and partridges or venison and would apply only to Company members and associated retailers. The right, however, was only granted until the end of 1635.¹⁸ The king had been extremely unjust, but he needed the money and since the Vintners had never had the right to sell victuals included in any of their charters, they had no legal redress. With this success behind him, it was unlikely that the king would cease to regard the wine trade as a profitable source of revenue. In November 1635 the retailers were called to a general meeting to hear the royal proposal that he be paid 1d. for every quart of wine sold retail. It was their unanimous opinion that they could not do it without great loss to the trade, and the Company therefore begged the king to extend his favour to them and forbear. Nothing further was done by the Crown so the Company felt emboldened to press the king for what he had promised for the £6,000 and an extension of their licence to victual beyond the end of the year.

A further petition the following month had as little effect as the first and most retailers, it would seem, simply crossed their fingers and went on selling victuals in 1636, even though the royal licence had expired. In 1637, the Company tried again. It retained the Recorder of London and Mr. Horne as counsel and drew up a petition asking the king to allow the Vintners to restrain coopers from retailing (an old quarrel this) and to restrain the granting of wine licences. The royal response, which came about a month later, was a further proposal for a levy of a penny or a

halfpenny per quart. The retailers' views were unchanged and in returning a negative answer to the king, the Company humbly submitted itself on behalf of its members for having transgressed the time limit for selling victuals, but asking that the following points be taken into consideration: that the Company, one of the twelve principal companies of the city, had borne its share of charges and offices of the said city, but in a short time it would be overthrown if the proposal was put into effect; that it had advanced a great sum of money to the king in hope of his favour, in permitting them to continue to dress victuals and had in fact got little benefit from it, though they were still paying interest on £2,000 of it and that the Company underwent a great annual charge on behalf of the Crown in providing 600 casks for the household for which they received barely half their worth. This continued defiance of royal wishes shows how strongly the majority of retailers felt on the matter, but it could not be denied that continued opposition to Charles' wishes was placing the Company in an awkward position. An indication of the Vintners' lack of favour came in May 1637 when the collectors of ship money, the recently revived tax which created a constitutional uproar, demanded 30s.od. in Aldgate Ward for the Company's property in Hartshorne Alley. The Company refused to pay on the grounds that it paid in Vintry Ward, where the Hall was, for their entire estate, and that no company, no matter if it had four times their estates, paid in any ward except that in which their Hall was. The fact that the Vintners were singled out for this sort of petty persecution suggests that their position of disfavour was common knowledge.¹⁹

It is against this background that the events of later 1637 must be viewed, events which turned the Vintners into a hated Company and caused the name of its Master to be execrated throughout the city if not throughout the kingdom. The spate of pamphlets on the subject of the wine monopoly which flooded the market in the early 1640s hold William Abell up to ridicule and abuse, querying his meteoric rise from humble beginnings to the ownership of the Ship Tavern in Fleet Street and a personal fortune of £10,000. The Vintners' records, however, show a very different pattern. He had been of sufficient standing to take up the livery as early as 1614 and was elected an Assistant in 1628. The city honoured him as aldermanic deputy for Queenhithe in 1634, and he was elected sheriff in 1636. During his year of shrievalty three men, Prynn, Burton and Bastwick, were condemned by Star Chamber to the pillories, to lose their ears and be imprisoned for life as a punishment for circulating

libellous attacks on the bishops. Abell as sheriff had entered the house of Burton, who was a clergyman, and carried him off with great violence to prison. The demonstration held in Palace Yard when the sentence was carried out was in effect the first of the puritan revolution, and Abell's unpopularity among Londoners was consequently high. The next year he was elected Master of the Company and it was during this mastership that the Company's actions are obscured in a fog of accusation and counter-accusation.²⁰

According to the account given stage by stage in the Vintners' own court books, the Master told the court in October 1637 of an overture made to him by a man called Richard Kilvert, who had a warrant from the king to prosecute in Star Chamber all merchants, vintners, coopers and others, who sold wine contrary to statute prices, and to levy and collect fines from the transgressors. He also said that the Marquess of Hamilton had a similar authority from the king and they were both willing to confer with some of the Company in the matter. Implicit also was the threat of prosecution for continuing to sell victuals after the king's licence had expired. On 6 November, all the retailers were called to a general meeting and told of what Kilvert had said. What happened next is somewhat ambiguous. The court book says that they were also told that the king expected payment from every retailer of a sum to be agreed on between his representatives and those of the retailers; in return they would be permitted to raise the retail price of their wine. The generality eventually accepted this in principle. They then selected a committee to settle the details. The committee chosen consisted of Alderman Abell and two of the Wardens and nine other members of the Company. Although they had the power to negotiate with the king, the committee's actions had to be ratified by the Court of Assistants; it was certainly not the first occasion on which a committee was selected to deal with a specific issue but it was the most significant. The committee worked out some highly advantageous terms for the Company. In return for the 40s. per tun that the king had always wanted, they asked for a monopoly in retailing wine, whereby merchants were to be enjoined to sell only to retailing vintners, and all coopers were restrained from buying and selling wine, for all free vintners to have the right to sell victuals, beer and tobacco, and receive a general pardon for all past misdemeanours, for all retailers in London to be free of the Company and all retailers to have the right to increase their prices by 1d. or 2d. per quart. Last but by no means least in importance the Company asked to have the right to farm the 40s.

duty, that is to collect it in exchange for an annual lump sum paid to the Crown. They may not actually have wanted the farm, but after learning that the customs farmers, some merchants and the coopers were already seeking it, they knew they could not afford to let anyone else have it.

The crucial question is, did the Company, worn down by the king's demands for the levy and threatened by an action in Star Chamber against its members, finally give in and accept the 40s. per tun as demanded, provided its members did not have to find it out of their own pockets but could recover it from their customers? Or did Abell and Kilvert, as hostile pamphlets later accused, plan the whole thing to make a profit on the farm for themselves and bully the generality of retailers until they accepted? The truth seems to be closer to the former explanation, if only because of the king's previous behaviour, since the terms asked for by the committee benefited the Company in general, while whether the farm would show a profit for anyone except the Crown was highly speculative.

In February 1638 the king graciously accepted the offer of 40s. per tun and £30,000 per annum for the farm of it. He did not, however, wish to enter into a contract with the entire body of London retailers, but with some particular men to whom he might have resort for the fulfilment of the contract. The retailers were then asked if they still agreed to the levy and if so, whether they agreed to farm it for £30,000. Both propositions were accepted, and it was thought necessary that the ten men, headed by Abell, who were named in the contract, should have thirty others, who would each underwrite the contract for £1,000 and share its charges in return for interest out of the profits, if any; this number was later increased to thirty-seven to cover the farm of the licences. That the Vintners were in fact acting under pressure is substantiated by an agreement they were forced to come to with the French and Spanish merchants. The latter wanted the retailers to agree to take a certain quantity of wine off their hands annually for four years on certain set days and at set prices determined by the Lords of Statute, who customarily set the prices; the quantity was to be an average of the wine imported for the last seven years. The retailers opposed this as they had opposed similar proposals, but the deputation who took this refusal to the merchants in the presence of Lord Treasurer Hamilton and Sir John Bankes, the Attorney General, in the end had to give in and accept the medium. It could, however, be suggested that the medium was the French and Spanish merchants' method of protecting their business after the Company had been granted a monopoly in retailing wine. At the same time, the Company agreed

to take on the farm of the issuing of wine licences for taverns at £7,000 per annum. They had previously considered buying this from the farmer, Lord Goring, but could only afford to offer £4,000 for his interest and when they learnt he wanted £10,000, had decided not to disparage the Company with a smaller offer. Whether there was a further measure of pressure put on the Company to take the licence farm as well, or whether it was simply decided that it would be sensible to have control over the licences despite the cost, is a matter for conjecture.²¹

In June 1638 the Company's common seal was handed over to Master Abell, to seal on the Company's behalf the four-part indenture for the 40s. impost. This was done at the office of the king's attorney, and the French and Spanish merchants were also party to the deed, since it was at the point when they sold to the retailers that the impost was levied, and the quantity of wine the Company agreed to take annually from them, the medium as it came to be known, guaranteed that £30,000 could be raised by the impost each year. However reluctantly, the Company was now committed to paying the Crown £37,000 per annum, which included the £7,000 for the farm of licences. Nor was this all. A month before Abell sealed the indenture, the Company had thought fit to make the Marquess of Hamilton a gift of £1,000. This was in return for his favour on behalf of those members who had breached the Star Chamber decree concerning victuals and for generally advancing the Company's affairs over the 40s. impost. Since the Marquess was about to leave for Scotland the money was borrowed forthwith. Hamilton in fact did extremely well out of the whole affair because a few days later, the king ordered that the Company pay him £8,000 immediately, for which allowance would be made in the sum of £30,000 they would pay the king that year. The king had granted Hamilton an annual pension of £4,000 for eight years and had not been able to pay it. Now he expected the Company to pay two years of it immediately. They raised £3,000 of it from the thirty-six men who agreed to underwrite the impost in sums of £100 and £50. Although this was all done in the Company's name, no corporate money was involved, the burden of finance and administration fell on the syndicate and those who had underwritten it.

In settling the medium, there were one or two adjustments to be made. The Coopers, now forbidden to buy and sell wine, had quite a lot left on their hands which it was only fair that the Vintners buy from them at a reasonable price. Protection also had to be given to merchant vintners who were members of the Company, who would not otherwise have

been able to dispose of their merchandise until all the medium wine had been purchased. The proportions settled for the medium in the January of 1639 were 9,000 tuns to be purchased from the French and Spanish merchants and 1,050 tuns from merchant vintners. The names of all the merchants who had wine for sale were to be printed and circulated to the retailers. The retailers themselves were expected to enter into bonds for the payment of the impost.

The farm of the impost and the wine medium never seems to have worked satisfactorily. The Coopers complained at the length of time the Vintners took paying for the wines they had agreed to buy. In August 1639 a number of those appointed to treat with the French merchants over the medium were asked to meet them and suggest a joint petition to the king to forbid the import of any more French wine until December, because they already had so much on their hands. This suggests that the wine figures settled for the medium were greater than the market could easily absorb. All retailing vintners in London and three miles around, were allotted specific quantities which they were required to buy, and this was naturally resented.²² Although the 40s. impost had been agreed on by the Company as the sole representative of all vintners, it was applicable not only in London but throughout the country, and was strongly resisted by many country vintners, few of whom were Company members. In the first year, most London retailers seem to have paid their duty 'with cheerfulness', and the farmers were able to pay the first £30,000 to the king. After that, it appears that things began to go wrong. In June 1640, the farmers begged the king to be allowed to yield up both the 40s. farm and that of the wine licences. The reason they gave was the general unwillingness of both merchants and retailing vintners to either pay the duty or enter into bonds for its payment. The farmers therefore declared that they lacked nearly £12,000 on the last half year's rent, and could not answer for its payment, nor for any future payments, despite the general rumours that the farmers were making great profits from the farm.

Once the wine project began to fail, recriminations multiplied. The French and Spanish merchants complained that the Vintners would not take their wines according to the medium, but bought from strangers, and petitioned the Council for relief. The Vintners were ordered to take up their wines, but the merchants said they took only the best and then would not pay for them: others refused to pay the impost. The merchants had their debtors committed to the Fleet, and forty of these vintners

petitioned the House of Commons. The debtors, headed by James Mason and Robert Quartermain, blamed the farmers, saying that they had been forced by them to accept the medium against their will. This was followed by the publication of a defence composed by George Griffiths on behalf of the farmers, which reiterated the entire sequence of events, and maintained that the farmers had undertaken the responsibility, not out of desire for profit, but to save their Company; that none of them, including Abell, dealt in wholesale wine, nor benefited from the increased retail price.²³

In January 1641 another petition was presented to Parliament by Roger Kilvert, a Spanish merchant (and brother of Richard), complaining of the retail prices of Spanish wines. The Company set up a committee to answer the detailed charges contained in the petition, namely that the retailers, by their recently allowed increase in prices, were making far too great a profit. Take, for example, canary wine. Kilvert claimed that the wholesale price of canary was £36 per tun, and that under the new regulations, retailers sold it at 11d. per quart, giving them a profit of £8 per tun. The Vintners' committee acknowledged that this was so, in theory, but in practice most tuns had 'a great want of gauge' (i.e. they contained considerably less wine than they should have done), the lees were unsaleable and that on average these factors, together with the normal charges before retail, amounted to approximately £8.13s.4d., so that instead of making a profit of £8 per tun, the retailer was often at a loss. In addition, they had to bear loss by leakage, always a hazard, and decay of the wine. At least 500 tuns of canary bought since the beginning of the vintage had cost £38 per tun and that about one-fifth of the wines bought by vintners was sold to country retailers at very low prices. Similar figures were produced for sacks and malagas by the committee and they indignantly denied that the retailing vintners had gained £80,000 by the sale of Spanish wines as Kilvert claimed.

Having rebutted this charge, the committee then carried the war into the enemy camp. The prices set annually for the sale of wine were kept by the retailing vintners, but the merchants often charged more than they should. The example they cited was Kilvert himself, who, they claimed, in February 1637 had thirty-two pipes of canary to sell. The price set by the Lords was £19 per pipe, but Kilvert refused to take less than £21.10s. and told the Vintners the Lords had no right to set a price on his goods. Eventually the Vintners were forced to agree to his price, but he then refused to give them an acquittance for the extra £48, giving it at the rate

of £19 per pipe instead. They named four witnesses to this piece of dishonest dealing. At present rates, the wholesale price was set at £16 for the 'smallest' French wines and £19 for the best, yet, they claimed, merchants were selling the smallest at upwards of £23. For their part, the retailers admitted that retail prices had risen considerably of late, but this they maintained was due to the merchants' hasty despatch of ships to the wine-growing areas competing with each other to be the first to buy, before the wines were ready for sale or their quality could be discerned. The retailers were quite happy to sell at lower prices provided they could buy their wine from merchants at rates which would enable them to pay their great charges and make a living from their trade. These charges, which too many people failed to take into account, included the rent of their houses, the cost of their servants, portorage, cooperage, cellarage and loss from leakage, decay and lees and that to cover all this and enable their families to live, they had to make a reasonable profit.²⁴

The House of Commons, which had not been summoned since 1629 was much interested in the excesses of authority committed by the king and his Council in the intervening years to the detriment of his subjects' rights. Since the wine monopoly was one of these, they were hardly likely to show much sympathy toward the Vintners' Company and still less towards the syndicate, headed by Alderman Abell, who actually ran the monopoly. When the Short Parliament had met in the spring of 1640 a great many complaints had been made to it about Abell, but its premature dissolution had saved him. When the Long Parliament was first called at the end of that year, he was not to be so lucky. He was arraigned as a delinquent and summoned to appear before the Committee of Grievances. On 19 January 1641 he was taken into custody and refused bail. In March 1641 Parliament resolved that the 40s. impost was illegal and that Abell and Kilvert were responsible both for its creation and execution; that it was illegal to prohibit the Coopers from buying and selling wine, but also to prohibit the retailing vintners from dressing and selling meat. During the debate, Isaac Pennington, M.P. for the city and one of the parliamentary puritans, spoke up on behalf of Abell, and showed Kilvert to be the man principally responsible. Pennington's politics were markedly different from Abell's, and the latter was 'the most unhappy, hated object of three kingdoms', but the solidarity of the Aldermanic bench still meant something.²⁵

When summoned before a committee of the Commons Kilvert tried to justify himself and Abell and throw all the blame on the Company. At a

meeting of all the retailers, it was agreed to present a general defence with the aid of counsel. To this end a committee was appointed to discover from all the retailers what wines they had sold between January 1638 and January 1641, what wines had been sold to country chapmen and what they had paid to the treasurer or receiver of the 40s. impost. This last was in fact Abell himself, who had been provided with a house in Aldermanbury to use as his office and a salary of £500 per annum. A secretary, George Griffiths, had been appointed also, at £200 per annum, and Kilvert received £1,000 for his services in floating the concern and a grant of £500 per annum out of the farm which he afterwards claimed to be repayment by the Crown of a debt of £2,000 owed by King James to him for eighteen years. The Company did not convince Parliament of its innocence in the matter of the wine project, it was hardly likely that it would, but the whole affair aroused an enormous amount of public interest, and was responsible for a great spate of broadsheets and pamphlets. The project of the wine monopoly involving as it did a courtier, Hamilton, an Alderman, Abell, and Kilvert who was an ecclesiastical lawyer (he was a proctor in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury) provided writers with a splendid target, as for instance in a pamphlet entitled, 'Reader, Here you'll plainly see judgment perverted by these three: A Priest, A Judge and a Patentee'.²⁶

A number of the pamphlets involved accounts of Abell and Kilvert plotting to obtain the monopoly but the most significant are the ones setting forth the Vintners' account of events and Kilvert's justification of his part. The first, 'A True Discovery of the Projectors of the Wine Project', was an account of events drawn from the Company's own court books, and was issued in part at least to influence M.P.s considering the petition of the forty vintners imprisoned for debt by the French and Spanish merchants. Briefly its case was that it was the Vintners' own proposal to levy the impost in return for concessions by the king, that it was the work of the general body of retailing vintners and that Abell was only one of the committee and employed in their service. All had been freely decided by the generality without being persuaded by Abell, and as for Kilvert, he was not even present at the meetings, had nothing to do with setting up the project and put no money into it. It goes on to defend the merchants over the medium of wine, and concludes with figures purporting to show the high level of profits the retailing vintners were making from the increased price of wine. Since it made use of the Company's court books, available only to a select few, it seems highly

likely that Abell himself was the moving force behind the pamphlet. Whether or not it achieved its aim of influencing the Commons it certainly spurred the Company, or at least a section of it, to take to print in its own defence. 'A True Relation of the Proposing, Threatening and Persuading the Vintners to Yield to the Imposition upon Wines' more or less states its own case in its title. It in fact laid the blame for the whole affair fairly and squarely on Abell's shoulders, setting out the king's earlier attempts to achieve an impost, and Abell's persuasion and bullying to get the generality to accept it this time. Gradually many members had stopped coming to meetings, so that when it was finally agreed it was not representative of the main body of retailing vintners, and was the culmination of two years' hard work by Abell. After it was accepted, Abell threatened to ruin any vintner who refused to charge the extra penny a quart and took legal sanctions against any who refused to pay the impost. The retailers claimed most of them had lost financially, since most of the medium wines lacked gauge, with between sixteen and sixty-four gallons missing per tun, and much of it was both dear and poor. The contractors, they claimed, also charged the impost on wine they had in their cellars, much of it bought long before.²⁷

So the arguments raged back and forth, each side trying to justify itself and blame the other. Where the exact truth lies will probably never be known, but it seems reasonable to suppose that it is to be found somewhere in between. The Company had resisted several previous attempts by the Crown and when threatened with Star Chamber decrees against its members, it finally gave in and offered the impost to the king. In return, it naturally took all the advantages it could get but the average retailing vintner almost certainly made no extra profit and technically neither did the Company. That Abell was the prime mover in persuading the Company to accept the impost cannot be denied, though how much profit he himself made is unknown. Yet the real villain of the piece seems to have been Kilvert, since it was he, and to some extent Hamilton, who first threatened the Company with the decrees and then proposed the project as a way to avoid them. Of all those involved, Kilvert seems to have gained most financially. Unmoved by the pamphlet warfare, the House of Commons decided against all those involved. A bill was brought in by which it appeared that Abell and Kilvert had £57,000 in their hands by the wine licence, which they had withheld from the king, and the Vintners of London, £66,000. All this money was to be immediately raised on their lands and estates and employed to the public use. The

Company never paid a sum of this sort and presumably managed to convince the Commons that it had never made money out of the project. Kilvert managed to escape apparently scot free, and the main punishment fell upon Abell. He was ultimately bailed in September 1641 and in the following April bought a pardon for £2,000. In June 1642 he was discharged from the Aldermanic bench because of his long absence and neglect of duty and the charge of delinquency brought against him in Parliament. Nor was he then permitted to sink into oblivion; In 1644 he was taken into custody for neglecting to pay his assessment for Parliament and again in 1652 for 'uttering dangerous words' against the Commonwealth.²⁸

IV

There is no doubt that the wine monopoly exercised a good deal of the average vintner's time and thoughts during the years of its existence, but because it was run by a syndicate and not by the Company itself, it did not absorb the Company's energies in quite the same way. It had never adventured any money on the project, deciding in 1638 against taking up one of the £1,000 shares because it was short of cash and doubtful whether the business would show a profit. It did, however, agree to take up the first share that fell vacant by the death of an underwriter, a promise which it was never called upon to put into practice. The Company's financial position, nevertheless, was far from happy. In the early 1630s it had been able to put £1,000 of its stock out at interest, but the payment of £6,000 to the king, gifts of large sums of cash to Hamilton and legal expenses had undermined its security. Although the sums were borrowed from individual members on bond, the Company paid interest on them and underwrote repayment. In 1640 the king was pressing the city very hard for the loan of £200,000 to finance his war with the Scots. The city procrastinated and Charles then asked the livery companies for £120,000 but most of the leading companies pleaded inability to pay because the Londonderry plantation had drained their resources. On 7 October 1640, the city finally having agreed to a loan, the Company was informed that its share was to be £2,500. This was raised in bond by borrowing £100 from twenty-five leading members, a list headed by Alderman Abell.²⁹

In July 1641 a poll tax was established for the purpose of disbanding the armies raised for the Scots War. The Masters and Wardens of each Company were ordered to make a written return of the names of every

man who was or had been a Master or Warden, the names of all the livery and freemen, stating who had ever fined for alderman or sheriff, and the parish and ward in which each member resided. A separate return for each ward was the responsibility of its Alderman. The Vintners' poll tax return has survived, though not in quite the form specified. It gives the names of its current Master and Wardens and lists the names of fifty-one members of the livery, some of whom had paid their poll tax at the rate of either £6.13s.4d. or £5, and stating who had held office. Of these, thirty-two were tavern-keepers with the signs of their taverns given, five were haberdashers, two linen drapers, one a silk dyer, one a salter, and the other ten only identified by their address. Eight vintners' widows, six of whose husbands had been liverymen, paid their assessments mostly at a rate of £1.13s.4d. Fifty-four freemen paid £3 each, forty-six of them tavern-keepers. Eighty-eight freemen unable to pay as much, paid sums ranging from £2 to 5s.; seventy-seven of them were tavern-keepers, and even Robert Butler, a prisoner in Newgate, paid his 5s. Fifty-three members paid their contributions directly to the commissioners, thirty-four of them in London, twenty-eight in Middlesex and Westminster. Nineteen members not resident in London did not pay at the Hall but to the commissioners of their respective counties. Seventy-two members were marked as either too poor to pay or as claiming to be so; many are noted as old or decayed members, although the majority still kept taverns.

This return, which is probably as comprehensive a record of the Company in the mid-seventeenth century as it is possible to get, gives a total membership of approximately 350, an overwhelming majority of whom were actively engaged in the retail wine trade.³⁰ In 1610 the Company had estimated members of approximately 150, an increase of about fifty per cent over the previous century. It seems unlikely that it had then more than doubled its membership in the next thirty years. The 1610 figure is based on the number of members assessed for the Irish estates with the lowest assessment at £3. Yet in 1641, eighty-eight freemen could not pay as much in a parliamentary assessment and seventy-two members were too poor to pay anything. It might be more accurate to suppose therefore, that in 1610 the total membership was considerably higher than 150, but that the balance was composed of the poorest members of the fraternity. Despite the Vintners' corporate problems, the early seventeenth century saw a great increase in the number of London taverns, a majority of which were occupied by vintners.

As the struggle between Crown and Parliament moved towards an armed conflict, so the pressures upon London increased, for each side regarded its support as crucial. By January 1642 Charles had lost London. He never regained it.³¹ The Common Council had passed into the hands of the parliamentary puritan party and the trained bands were called out, 6,000 strong under the command of Philip Skippon, a professional soldier and veteran of the Dutch wars, to defend the city from royal reprisals. On 19 April 1642, the Vintners received a precept from the Mayor asking for certification of what amount of gunpowder, match and shot they had in store, and the number of arms they had ready for use; they were also asked to provide 'an engine for quenching of fyre in case of danger'. The city raised a force of 8,000 on behalf of Parliament, and was almost immediately asked for further pecuniary assistance. An ordinance asked them for a loan of £100,000 for a year at 8 per cent 'for the great and pressing necessities of this kingdom and the kingdom of Ireland'. It was to be secured and repaid on the good faith of Parliament. It was raised in the usual way, upon the companies, the Vintners' share being £5,000. Half was raised first by twenty-eight men contributing sums between £50 and £20. A month later the Company was being pressed for the other half of the sum. Those of the livery who had not already contributed were ordered to do so, and to make up the balance, the Company borrowed £1,000 for fourteen months at a rate of 7 per cent from Mr. Dutton, a scrivener. In September, in reply to another mayoral precept, forty muskets and ten pikes with their 'furniture' were sent to Guildhall from the Company's armoury. This was in order to supply the parliamentary forces with 6,000 muskets and 4,000 pikes.³²

In November all their remaining arms and ammunition were delivered to Captain Underwood, and six men, who were apparently all servants to vintners, were equipped with musket, sword-belt, bandoliers and a vest (or stout leather jerkin), to form part of the two extra regiments of foot for the defence of the city. All these forces had to be victualled and paid. Early in 1643 a weekly assessment of £10,000 was imposed on the city, with a monthly rebate of £3,000. In May, the collectors of Vintry Ward were demanding £20 per week from the Company for the maintenance of the armies. The Master and Wardens visited the responsible committee at Guildhall and had the assessment halved to £10. At the same time, the city embarked on a programme to strengthen its own defences. This move was popular with those of all political views, since no Londoner wanted fighting in the streets of his own city. The work was organised

by parish and by company and the whole city fell to enthusiastically, women and children as well. Friendly rivalry spurred them on; on one day the feltmakers with their wives and families marched out to work, on the next almost the entire Company of Vintners with their wine porters and servants followed suit, flags flying and drums beating. No one pleaded exemption, gentlemen, members of parliament, members of the Inns of Court, all joined in.³³

Every member of the Company was willing to toil upon the city walls with his own hands, but the almost continuous demands made upon the Company for cash were driving it to desperation. In August 1643 a further £50,000 had to be raised in the city in view of the nearness of the king's forces. The Company raised half its assessment of £5,000 and the Court decided that the only way it could raise the rest was by selling its plate. A meeting of the General Court refused to countenance this and so a petition was drawn up to be presented to the Committee of Lords and Commons giving the reasons why the Company simply could not afford to lend any more. Its property was very small and heavily charged to pious uses, while the Company itself was in debt for £1,000 on which it was paying interest at 8 per cent. The income from its lands was not even sufficient to pay the interest, and it was therefore finding it impossible to find anyone willing to lend it any more. Many loans were due for repayment, but even where the lenders waived the interest, the Company could not afford the principal. It had supplied all the arms it could for Parliament's service and sent ordnance and gunpowder to Ireland, and held bonds issued by the city under its common seal worth £624.8s.0d. which should have been long since repaid. The petition ended on the sombre note that having already advanced £6,000 to Parliament it had no more and could not raise it and was indeed facing sequestration of its lands. The wills of the dead would therefore be unperformed, the poor unrelieved, its borrowed money unpaid and the stocks of orphans and other trusts wasted, all to the great disgrace of the Company. Two weeks after the petition was presented, it was decided to send a copy of the rental and the number of freemen to the parliamentary committee to help prove the case.

The committee seem to have recognised the genuine desperation in the plea, for the Company was allowed to rest for a while. It still, however, owed £300 for weekly assessments and had received a demand that it be paid at Guildhall within two days. The Vintners were forced into the humiliating position again of being totally unable to pay it or to borrow

the money to pay. Their debts were now over £7,000 and they were paying more than £450 per annum in interest, almost the equivalent of their income from rents, and the rest of their annual receipts totalled only £868. Despite the parliamentary committee's acceptance of the Vintners' inability to pay the rest of the £5,000, two persons named Kames and Lyndsey were still threatening the Company that they had a warrant and authority to sequester their lands. The Court therefore decided to petition the committee again, asking that this authority be revoked despite the parliamentary ordinance ordering sequestration. This second petition seems also to have had the desired effect. No further demands were made for a year, but then in November 1644 the Company was pressed for a further £500, part of the original demand of £5,000. This time the parliamentary committee named eleven vintners who were to provide the sum if the Company could not raise it. A petition for relief based on the fact that these members had already contributed over and above their private means was rejected, and the money was eventually raised in sums of £20 and £10 on members who had not borne the brunt so far.³⁴

The city was still contributing heavily towards the support of the parliamentary army under Sir Thomas Fairfax. In October 1645 when the Company received its assessment it paid £50 promptly, in the hope that it would not be asked for the balance, having shown its willingness if not its ability to pay. It was now £10,000 out of pocket and paying interest on most of it, it had sold its plate, and the engagements of its private members were higher than for most citizens. They were rated at the highest level, the cost of their rents and furniture was great, and the customs and excise on wines were the equivalent of 10s. in the pound while for the majority of other commodities it was only 2s. In spite of petitions to this effect, the Master was still being harried the following spring for yet more money for parliamentary affairs. Knowing that it had already borrowed more than it could reasonably hope to repay, the Company's only hope seemed to be the repayment of some of the loans it had already made and which were overdue for repayment. To this end it begged the parliamentary committee for aid, particularly to gain repayment of two loans of £156 and £322.8s.od. made to the city in 1597. The result was a happy one. Two separate sums of £250 were paid to the Company from the city Chamber. This enabled the Master and Wardens to pay another £30 towards Fairfax's army, and avoid the threat of committal to gaol which hung over them.

Similar assessments continued over the next few years, all of which the

Company had great difficulty in paying. In 1648 it petitioned the Mayor for a lowering of its assessment, claiming that it was rated more highly than other companies and landlords. In February 1649 the Renter Warden was ordered by the Court to abate 2d. in the pound for one month on all the Company's rents within the city walls for all the taxes assessed for Fairfax and the army, and in the May of that year the Company paid £5 to prevent soldiers being billeted in the Hall. In January 1651 £75 were assessed on them towards further fortifications, but the Master was able to tell the Court that he had reason to believe if half the sum were paid promptly they would not be pressed for the remainder.

Not only were the affairs of the Company in dire straits, but individual members were also in difficulties. They too were paying heavy assessments, the civil war was highly disruptive of trade and after the country began to settle down, Parliament engaged in a war with the Dutch, who transported much of the wine imported into England. When this ended in 1654, having caused a severe dearth of wine, the trade began to pick up substantially. Parliament immediately sought to make it profitable and employed the same methods, for which it had so condemned Charles I. The tax amounted to £6 per tun of wine, twice as much as Charles had imposed with his 40s. excise. The consequently high price of wine forced many to give up drinking it, while many well to do families who had purchased in bulk had been ruined by their adherence to the Royalist cause. When Protector Cromwell and his council attempted to fix the prices of wines, both the wine merchants and the Vintners' Company protested so strongly that the Council was forced to delay its plans indefinitely.³⁵

In the spring of 1659, at the end of a period of thirty to forty years which had seen the Company humiliated and brought to the brink of ruin, it took stock of its position. It was now about £10,000 in debt, not the highest sum its debts had reached, since it had paid off about £1,100 since 1655. Its interest payments were running at £600 per annum, while its income from rents was £400 per annum, of which half was appropriated in charity trusts. In order to save the Company from ruin 'after 400 years of honourable history', and in time to bring it back to prosperity, the Court made a number of stern decisions. For the foreseeable future, no money was to be spent on dinners or public feasts, nor were gratuities to be given to anyone. No law suits were to be undertaken except where essential to preserve the Company's ancient privileges, and only essential repairs were to be carried out on their property. The

only expenditure its officials were allowed was 30s. for the Master and Wardens' dinner on binding days, to be paid out of quarterage, 40s. on audit and search days, £3.10s. on the annual view day and finally £30 for wine and provisions on Lord Mayor's day and £40 on Election days. The Master and Wardens were to take great care that pensions and annuities were paid out of rents strictly according to the will of the donor. All money paid for binding, livery and other fines was to go directly to pay the interest on debts and as soon as the Renter Warden had £150 in hand, he was to spend £100 paying off interest. In future all leases of property were to be at a rent of annual value, rather than by fine and low annual rent so that the Company could pay interest and some principal out of the revenue, and none were to be for more than twenty-one years, and all paid clear of taxes. Several sums of money which had been left to the Company to be lent to young men were to be appropriated until the debts were paid and then the donors' wills would be carried out. Finally, the Master and Wardens were to enter into bonds of £500 each that they would discharge their duties satisfactorily. Having taken these firm steps to put its affairs in order, the Company prepared to face the final years of the seventeenth century, secure in the knowledge that whatever happened, the next forty years could hardly be worse than the previous ones.³⁶

Chapter VI



The Vintners and Ulster: the Londonderry Plantation

The question of Ireland has never ceased to bedevil English politics and the foundations of the problems of the modern province of Ulster were laid in the early seventeenth century. The city of London and its livery companies were, against their will, involved from the beginning. In the early Tudor period, the Crown's system was to rule the wild Irish tribes by English governors, respecting the natives' way of life but gradually civilising them. This might have worked if England had had the money and the trained colonial administrators to govern. Under Elizabeth, with the native population Catholic, and viewed as allies by Spain, the English felt that Ireland could be held only by settling large numbers of Protestant Englishmen there. This entailed the dispossession of the natives from large tracts of the countryside. The original plan had been to allow the Irish as much land as they could cultivate and plant settlers on the rest. In practice everything was done to attract as many settlers as possible. The Irish were not permitted to have undertenants, and since they were not for the most part given to regular agriculture, they were forced into an inferior position. Apart from English soldiers who had served in the Elizabethan wars in Ireland and were rewarded with land, men of capital were preferred as colonists, since they could afford a long term investment, and while not perhaps settling in Ireland themselves, would send younger sons and cousins. Undertenancies were discouraged but nevertheless occurred, largely because the Irish themselves offered good rents and fines, and from lack of alternative, were taken on. This was the pattern throughout most of the province of Ulster, where a rebellion had taken place in 1595, and in selected areas in the south. No grants, however, were made in county Coleraine or county Derry, the centre of the rebellion and a problem area.¹

In 1609 James I and his minister, Robert Cecil, Earl of Salisbury,

offered the counties to London to colonise, in the hope that the city's wealth might enable it to settle and defend the whole area. In July of that year the Mayor directed each of the livery companies to send four representatives to discuss the novel situation. On 28 January 1610 the city agreed with the Privy Council that it should lay out £20,000 and within two years build 200 houses at Derry and 100 at Coleraine, the two principal towns in the county. It was agreed that they should concentrate first on Coleraine but that Derry should at least be defensible by the winter of 1611. Until the settlers were able to protect themselves, the forces of the Crown would do so. Although agreed in principle in 1610, the formal charter was not granted to the city until 1613. The first demand for money from the Mayor reached the Vintners even before the agreement with the Privy Council was made. The Company's share of the £20,000 to be raised was £1,040 and committees from the livery and yeomanry were appointed to assess each member's levy, with the poorest being excused. The Vintners, together with the Fishmongers and the Merchant Taylors, seem to have been virtually the only companies who collected the money without difficulty, but in July the Court appointed two of its members to press the Common Council for a mitigation of the amount of their contribution.

In January 1611, the Company received from the Mayor a precept of crucial importance. They were asked whether they wished to take a proportionate share of land in Ulster in lieu of their contributions, build a town on it and provide settlers at their own cost, or whether they wished to leave everything in the hands of the city's Irish Society, merely providing the money. The Court appointed a committee to sound out the views of the other companies. In less than a fortnight it was decided to accept the land, and a share in the general profits. Seven of the twelve great companies, the Drapers, Fishmongers, Goldsmiths, Grocers, Ironmongers, Mercers and Salters, and some of the smaller companies also accepted land. The original demand for £20,000 was paid in four instalments and by the time the second two were paid, the Vintners were drawing on the Company's stocks as well as making individual assessments, and when the second sum of £20,000 was raised most companies found it difficult to collect by assessment and also began to draw on stocks. The Vintners used both methods but in August 1611 the Court decided that in specific cases, the Company would pay the shares of those members who were willing to surrender their rights in the previous payments and make over to the Company all their interest in the land and other profits. By 1613

only the Skinners and the Clothworkers were still raising money entirely by individual assessment. The Fishmongers, Goldsmiths, Grocers, Ironmongers and Mercers possessed sole interest in their companies' Irish estates, while the Drapers and Merchant Taylors, like the Vintners, gradually acquired much of their individual members' interests. When the third sum of £20,000 was demanded the Vintners raised some by individual assessment (except for those members who had opted out) and paid the rest from the common stock. In 1620 the Court decided to repay the capital raised by individuals after the first six payments, and thus acquired sole interest. This was the last general levy made in the city towards the Irish plantation, and out of the total £60,000 contributed, £47,717, or approximately 80 per cent, was supplied by the twelve principal companies.²

In December 1613 the companies were assigned twelve portions of land, which together with lands held by the church, and Sir Thomas Phillips, former Captain of Coleraine, and the towns of Derry and Coleraine (which were to be administered by the Irish Society), formed what is now known as county Londonderry. The twelve portions or manors had been apportioned by the city's commissioners with great care, taking into consideration the availability of wood and water, the quality of the land and the nearness of towns and security. The fifty-five contributing companies were arranged into twelve groups, each headed by one of the great companies with as many of the lesser companies as was necessary to make the total contribution of the whole group one twelfth of £40,000. The Vintners had nine associate companies, though at £3,120 theirs had not in fact been the smallest contribution among the twelve. Their associates were the Woodmongers, Weavers, Plumbers, Poulterers, Tilers, Bricklayers, Blacksmiths, Fruiterers and Curriers, together with the Grocers, who on their own had paid more than one-twelfth of the total sum, and therefore had a share in this group as well. The twelve portions were then assigned by lot, drawn by the city's swordbearer. Some of the lesser companies then sold their shares to their principals, though none of the Vintners' associates did so.

The Vintners' manor was the third largest of the proportions, consisting of approximately 48–50 square miles or 32,600 acres, more than six per cent of the county; only the Skinners' and the Drapers' manors were larger. It was situated on the south-eastern border of the county, furthest away from Derry and Coleraine, and was roughly rectangular, with the short side bordering on the River Bann, the county boundary. Two other

ivers, the Moyola in the south and the Clandy in the north, ran through the manor; both were tributaries of the Bann. It was bordered by the Mercers' manor in the north, the Skinners' in the north-west, the Drapers' in the south and south-west and the Salters' and some of Sir Thomas Phillips' lands in the south. Bellaghy, its main settlement, was in the south-east corner. Approximately one-third of the manor was church or glebe land, and a large area of bog, itself almost as big as the church lands, bordered them to the west. Sir Thomas Phillips commented that the proportion 'lies in the midst of Glanconkeyne (the great forest of Glenconkein), a very fast country by reasons of the woods, bogs and bordering mountains, so as it is fitted there should be a great care had in the well planting thereof with British; and that from these several plantations there be device made of the fittest and most convenient places for highways to be laid out and large paces [passes] cut through the woods to answer each several plantation. This being performed will make a country which was the seat and nursery of rebellion, a pleasant, rich and plentiful country.' It is clear therefore, that the Vintners were not among the most lucky in the draw. Although large acreage and well-watered, the manor was also far too heavily wooded and bog-ridden for ease of communication and far away from the security of the two fortified towns of the county.³

Having received their manor, the Vintners had then to decide what land was to be set aside as demesne and what was to be available for freeholders. There were supposed to be a minimum of five freeholders per manor, each to hold approximately one hundred acres. In Bellaghy a castle had to be built and solid respectable houses for the English tenants. In March 1614 the Company appointed a committee to deal with Irish affairs, to collect money and direct agents and workmen. At this stage it is probably fair to say that no vintner had seen the Irish manor, but then Henry Jackson was appointed one of the Company's agents and by the end of 1614 he was able to send home a report on the progress of the building works. In April 1615 he was sent a letter giving him £100 more than agreed in his articles, but ordering him to proceed immediately to building houses, and providing materials for the castle by next spring, according to his commission. What qualifications Jackson had for this commission are not mentioned. Most of the agents sent over by the companies were poorly qualified, and were simply told to build as many houses as they could in a short space of time. Contrary to the king's intention, some companies had already leased all their rights to individuals.

A survey carried out in 1615 showed that very few of those granted lands in Ulster had carried out their engagements to the full and Londoners were included among the defaulters. Many of the English had not begun any husbandry because they had not enough confidence to provide themselves with servants and cattle and remained in the comparative security of the towns. Much of the land was grazed by Irish stockholders, who offered more immediate profit, though less security, than English tenants, because of their willingness to offer almost any rent to retain land they regarded as rightfully theirs. Without the husbandry of Scottish settlers, the English colonists would almost certainly have starved. The Irish tenants were more numerous on London lands than anywhere else. There should have been 800 English undertenants on the twelve manors, but in fact there were very few. This is hardly surprising. The companies by 1615 had sunk twice the original sum of £20,000 demanded of them into the plantation and cannot really be blamed for seeing high Irish rents as going some way towards giving a return on their money. As a result of the survey they were given until the end of 1616 to make good the deficiencies on their manors.

Early in 1616 the Vintners summoned a general meeting of those members who still had a financial interest in Ireland. The state of affairs, based on a report from Henry Jackson, who had returned at the end of the previous year, was explained to them and it was proposed that they should lease their entire manor to a tenant, like several of the other companies. The meeting decided that this was probably the best solution, if it was what the Court also advised. It was. On 9 May 1616, therefore, articles of agreement to lease the manor were signed with John Rowley and Baptist Jones. Before the actual lease was drawn up, the Court listed several points at issue which had first to be resolved. These included the right to take timber for building only from places assigned by the lease, that if the Company failed to specify where roads were to be cut through the woods, then these were to be decided by two Justices of the Peace, that the castle and demesne lands were to be known as Vintners' Manor and the rents of freeholders were to be the same as those reserved in like cases by the other companies. Arrangements were to be made to provide a place for the payment of the rent and provisos in the event of it not being paid or the covenants not being performed. The Company also stated that it intended to procure a patent to hold a market, and that it intended by the lease to provide 'some moderation that the natives may not be put off'.⁴

The following October, the Company commissioned Robert Goodwin,

William Cottesmore and John Raye to assign places for cutting roads through the woods and also for clearing woods to increase the size of such balliboes (the Irish term for a freeholder's holding) as did not include sixty acres of arable pasture land. They were also to consider and appoint the six townlands for the freeholders; that is to say, the areas marked out for the main English settlements in the manor. The Court thought it fit to write to John Rowley and Baptist Jones and ask for the names of six freeholders who would be resident, since the six named by them already would not be ready and resident to do service there. The Company was obviously experiencing difficulty obtaining the required English settlers. They did not like the names Rowley and Jones returned to them as prospective freeholders, though the Court minutes give no explanation for such dislike and asked them to return other names speedily. The Company itself recommended that Thomas Egerton, a master carpenter who had just returned from overseeing much of the building programme, should be one of them. It took Baptist Jones the best part of a year to submit fresh names, together with a year's rent of £120. This set of names seems to have been accepted, for they were forwarded for approval to the Governor and committees of the Irish Plantation.

On 22 October 1618 the Company's manor was officially named 'The Manor of the Company of Vintners', and each freeholder whose name was approved was to have one balliboe of land at a rent of 40 shillings per annum, and they were bound to perform the services pertaining to all freeholders in the Plantation. As corporate bodies, the companies were not permitted to receive grants of land without royal licence, and the conveyances therefore followed letters patent granted by the Crown in 1615, authorising the companies to receive, and the Irish Society to alienate, property granted to the city in the Londonderry charter. In none of the deeds conveying the manors to the twelve principal companies is there any mention made of the inferior companies. It was a tacit understanding only, though guaranteed by an act of Common Council in December 1613. By 1619, when the city had contributed £60,000 in all, of the £5,000 contributed by the Vintners' group, they had themselves paid £3,120, the Grocers £874, the Woodmongers £320 and the rest sums ranging from £96 to £150, a sum total of £5,082. When the Company finally received its conveyance, it was given a copy of the attainder of the Earl of Tyrone, to whom the land had originally belonged. The attainder by which Tyrone forfeited his estates guaranteed the Vintners' title to it.⁵

Baptist Jones visited London in person in April 1619 to request alteration in the freeholds as set out by the commissioners in 1616. They were, he alleged, so near to the mountains and bogs and in such dangerous and barren places that the freeholders refused to build or reside there. The Company accepted his arguments and agreed, presumably on Jones' recommendation, that the freeholds would be as follows: Jones himself at the town of Clonon, Thomas Staples at the town of Teoneagh, William Gardner at Moegni, Richard Jennings at Kolknadye, William Harrison at Monishnagrilla and William Rowley with half a freehold at Tobermore and half at Grenaghan. The freeholders themselves had changed somewhat from those accepted by the authorities in 1618; Jennings and Staples were both newcomers. By the summer of 1619, most of the statutory buildings was presumably complete, because the Company was advancing plans to build a church at the main settlement of Bellaghy. Baptist Jones was ordered to retain the year's rent due as part of the sum of £140 allowed him for building the church. He was to enter a bond to have it completed by the beginning of November 1620. The Company gave him clear specifications for building purposes. The church was to be sixty feet long and twenty-five feet wide, with walls sixteen feet high and four bricks thick, topped with tiles or shingle, glazed, and with pulpit and seats. Jones was to have it consecrated at his own charge, and in default of the work being completed, he was to pay the rent. Jones had not yet formally received his lease because the Company had not been granted livery and seisin of their manor, but he was pressing the Company for it. He also wanted to borrow money from them. It was agreed that he should be lent £500 by Elizabeth Feltham, widow, under the Company's seal, and that his security for the repayment of that, and the payment of his rent, was to be the lease itself.⁶

In the meantime trouble was building up between the Companies and the Crown. The Crown survey of 1616 had found fault with them for their neglect in building fortifications and encouraging English settlers and for allowing natives to remain in residence. In July 1617 the Privy Council summoned the Irish Society to appear before them charged with a breach of the city's agreement with the Crown and the rules of the Plantation. No further steps were taken, but it was the first formal charge against the city. One of the city's strongest critics was Sir Thomas Phillips. He had been Captain of Coleraine and defended it in the late rebellion, but with the London agreement he had surrendered it for Limavady. In the early days he had been very helpful, showing city and company agents

round and supplying much local information. He fortified his castle at Limavady and built a village and did all and more that was required of him. He was therefore in a position to criticise the Londoners, who, although they did much, had not done as much as they should, particularly in the matter of encouraging settlers. As a soldier deeply concerned for his adopted county, he felt that they cared more for present profit than future security, and that they cared little that of the total of adult males in the county three-quarters were Irish, and of the rest, only about a third were capable of bearing arms. His quarrels with the city seem to have been on a number of subjects; the Irish Society complained that he domineered over their jurisdiction, and he claimed that their agents as Justices of the Peace flouted the authority of the sheriff. They would not agree to have the county gaol and assize court at Limavady, where the assize had generally been held and which it was agreed was the most suitable central place, presumably because it was Phillips' town and not administered by the Irish Society. The city's dilatory action meant it took him eighteen months to get the formal grant of his lands at Limavady after he had surrendered the governorship of Coleraine and during that time he had received no income from rents. A petition to the Privy Council eventually resulted in compensation for his losses by the city, but by 1613 his initial enthusiasm for the Londonderry Plantation had disappeared and the city was left with a well-informed and influential critic on the spot.

In 1618 a Crown Survey carried out by Nicholas Pynnar showed that on each of the twelve manors there was a castle either completed or being built with some stone houses grouped about it. Three companies, the Mercers, Drapers and Ironmongers administered their manors directly through their agents, the rest leased theirs to individuals. As to British tenants, Pynnar gives figures for only six manors, all in the latter class: Goldsmiths, Fishmongers, Haberdashers, Merchant Taylors, Skinners and Vintners. All had six or seven freeholders, about twenty leaseholders and about thirty families. The Vintners, he noted, had the full number of required freeholds and leaseholds, but the tenants were all at the assizes and the agent was in England, so he did not see them. The total number of men was seventy-six, a high proportion of the figure of 642 he gives for the whole county. In another report, Sir Thomas Phillips gave more details of Vintners' Manor in 1622. There were two resident freeholders (only four other manors among the twelve had more), nine leaseholders (only two other manors had more) and there were eighty adult men,

sixty-six of them capable of bearing arms (again only two other manors had more). On the other hand, Vintners' Manor had the third highest total of native Irish residents, numbered by Phillips at 684. In the period 1623-4 there was growing government anxiety over the defence of Ireland. After yet another survey, this time largely to ascertain the number of natives in the Ulster Plantation and the quantity of land they held, the Londoners protested that their performance had far exceeded what had been expected of them. From 1615 onwards the presence of natives on company land had been a technical offence, which from 1619 meant a fine per native head, and by these fines the companies had sustained great damage. In the protracted struggle that followed between the Crown and the city over the county of Londonderry, the issues were clearly defined. The city was charged with failure to carry out its articles of agreement, and the remedies prescribed for such failure, like the removal of natives and the building of more British settlements. The city responded that it had fully carried out its obligations under the agreement, rebutting the charges against it point by point, and refused to undertake any of the extra tasks set for it by the Crown, except for a few minor ones, dismissing them as impossible or superfluous.⁷

During these years, the Vintners had troubles of their own, chief of which was the unsatisfactory nature of their tenant. In July 1621 at a general meeting of the interested companies, it was agreed that if he paid his rent to date and surrendered his old lease, Baptist Jones, now knighted, was to have a new lease for the rest of his unexpired term on the same terms, except that the rent of £120 per annum was to be paid once a year only, and he was to have £50 allowed him out of the rent to finish the church. In November 1622 a letter was sent to Sir Baptist ordering a speedy payment of his debts and overdue rent, and in the following April Richard Lee was commissioned to recover the debts by legal means. A few days later they received a letter from their erring tenant, saying he had sent them two years' rent and other money by Sir William Windsor, who appeared at the Hall and promised to pay it in a fortnight. At the expiry of that time he appeared and said he could not pay the £320. Sir Baptist Jones died about January the following year, and a freeman of the Company, Thomas Conway, was commissioned immediately to go to Ireland and sort out the Company's affairs. Robert Goodwin of Londonderry was given letters of attorney for the recovery of the debts due to the Company and for the possession of the manor. He soon reported that Lord Belfast had offered to take over the arrears of rent, but without

giving any certainty of how he intended to pay. Goodwin was therefore asked to press for further details and report. A precept from the Lord Mayor at this period ordering that all freeholders on the manor should be resident and all natives removed, brought the response of a letter from the Court to each freeholder reminding him of his obligations. No comment at all was made on the second half of the precept.⁸

The question of Jones' debts and the repossession of the manor dragged on for a year. Jones' widow had married a man called Henry Conway and it seemed sensible for the Company to come to some sort of agreement with him. In May 1625 it offered to abate £160 of the total debt of £1,140. Conway paid £350 and turned to his relative, Lord Conway, and to Lord Grandison for aid. The Company thought it had better engage the interest of someone of similar standing and Lord Mandeville agreed to help them. Their lordships then settled down to study the matter. The inferior companies agreed to accept whatever course of action the Vintners thought best, and the Court decided to offer to abate £200 of the debt completely and allow four years to pay £400 of the remainder. If this offer was not accepted then they would return Mr. Conway's £350 in exchange for peaceful repossession of their lands. Conway seems to have accepted the terms, for his lease dates from July 1625, running for fifty-one years at the same rent of £120 per annum. Yet in January 1627 a committee was sent by the Company to Lord Conway to acquaint him with Henry Conway's neglect. Despite the Company's kindness in abating some of the arrears, he had not been in touch with them since, let alone paid any money, and they begged his lordship to use his influence before they took legal action. In March 1627 the committee saw William Latham, the Recorder of Coleraine about recovering the debts due from Conway and reletting their lands. Not until May 1628 did Conway deign to appear and then he offered to pay £360 rent due on the new lease and £50 of the old debt of £450 if the Company would abate the rest. The Court gave him a week in which to make a better offer, and the committee which dealt with Irish affairs did their best to persuade him to advance his offer but without result. The committee therefore was ordered to confer with counsel on the best means to gain possession of their land and debts. It retained Sir Thomas Crew with the aim of seeking the favour of the Lord Chancellor of Ireland to grant a sequestration for the recovery of debts. Having gone this far, the Court then told Conway that it would still refrain from pressing legal action any further if he paid the £360 due in the new lease and £150 of the old debt. It was a generous

offer, even though they expected the money to be paid within a year at the most and on such security in London as the Court approved. It was hardly surprising that Henry Conway accepted.⁹

The general relations between London and its companies and the Crown over the Londonderry plantation meanwhile had gone from bad to very bad. The Crown ordered their revenues to be sequestered by the Irish Government in 1625 and used to put into effect specific articles that it claimed the Londoners should have done and had not, but it later had to back down over this policy because of the king's dependence on the city for money at home. Finally in 1627, a special commission of enquiry into Londonderry alone was set up, to discover deficiencies and prescribe remedies. First the commission discovered that the fortifications were not completed as they should have been, and the rents were sequestered again to make the fortifications good. The Corporation and the Masters and Wardens of the companies petitioned the Privy Council against this second sequestration and had it withdrawn. The city's representatives in Ireland followed a policy of obstructing the work of the commission, and engaged in a long struggle with Sir Thomas Phillips, who was authorised to assist the commissioners. When the latter's report was made, Sir Thomas Phillips claimed it was biased in favour of the city (which only meant that it did not share *his* bias, and leads to the supposition that the report was essentially fair).

The main criticism of the report was the high number of native Irish and the low numbers of English settlers on the land. It accepted that the Londoners had at first intended to plant the lands with English tenants and had originally offered the land to them at 4d. per acre, but the high rents offered by the Irish had caused them to withdraw the offer. The report now advised that all natives not conforming to English habits and the Protestant religion be removed from land held by both the Londoners and the ecclesiastical authorities. The companies were condemned for leasing their lands in far greater acreages than the articles of the plantation permitted, so there were fewer lessees, and if they had really sought the good of the plantation, they would have divided the land into smaller lots among more English tenants, at reasonable rents and on leases for lives. The report gives the number of able-bodied males in the county as 1,412 British and 2,293 Irish, not, it may be thought, odds overwhelmingly in favour of the Irish. Of these, seventy-three British and 207 Irish it gives as being resident on Vintners' Manor. Among the other manors, four had more than a hundred settlers each, the Vintners ranking fifth,

and four had over two hundred Irish, including the Vintners, whilst the Skinners had almost double that number.¹⁰

Dissatisfied with the commission's finding, Phillips compiled a collection of documents illustrating the course of the plantation since 1609. He lists the sums raised by the companies for Ireland, and the rents paid by the Irish Society to the king and estimates the Londoners' receipts and disbursements for the period 1610-1629. He in fact gives the city's profits as over £150,000, an enormous over-estimate, but his collection and the commissioner's report formed the basis of a prosecution of the city in Star Chamber. That the Irish Society was not rolling in accumulated profits is indicated by its application to the twelve companies for £100 each towards the cost of defending the suit. The case resulted in a fine of £70,000 and the resumption of the Londoners' lands by the Crown. This was pure vindictiveness by the Crown and almost certainly had as its basis the latter's pressing desire for money, since it certainly did not do any more on the resumed land and charged much higher rents. The most serious charge, the failure to plant sufficient settlers, was one the Londoners were certainly guilty of, but then so were most of the Ulster undertakers and no-one else suffered deprivation. The full amount of the fine was never exacted, and only about £12,000 of it was paid, but the loss of their lands was a humiliation for the city and before very long the king had cause to regret having antagonised it so severely.¹¹

The Crown soon learned that the Londoners' claim that they had been easy landlords and had not made any vast profits was correct. On the twelve manors rents went up by nearly three times as much; Henry Conway, who had never been able to pay the Vintners' rent of £120 per annum properly, now found he was being asked to pay £150 per annum merely for the manor house and 3,000 acres. When he failed to pay, the royal commissioners distrained his cattle. Rack-renting was a common grievance among the British settlers and it was taken up by the Irish Parliament the moment that the king's great minister, Strafford, left Ireland and turned his attention to recalcitrant subjects in England. Nor is it entirely surprising to find Henry Conway as one of the M.P.s for Londonderry. Back in England London hugged its grievance to itself until Parliament was called, and then, when the Commons wanted to raise a loan of £100,000, it was hinted that this would only be forthcoming if the city got its Irish lands back. A petition for redress led to a parliamentary enquiry which vindicated the city. By 1641 the complete restitution of the Irish lands by the Commons was in sight, but an Irish

uprising in Ulster, which was largely successful, meant that in the end the city had to wait until Cromwell's conquest of Ireland before the Commons' decision was implemented.¹²

Because the Vintners' own records give little detail of what was happening on its Irish manor, these must be collected from the various commissions. The conditions imposed on the companies were based on those articles in force for the Ulster plantation in general. The companies had to provide on each 'proportion', a stone-built house with a bawn or fortification, and a minimum of thirty British families of which six were to be freeholders and the rest leaseholders of various sorts. Each company was to provide and keep in the main house sufficient arms for all the adult British males. No land was supposed to be leased to the Irish, who were to be deprived of all inducement to remain, although the task of actually expelling natives was the concern of the state. By 1622, rather later than it should have been, most building work had been completed, and on each proportion there was usually a fortified house, a dozen or so stone houses for English families and a church and a mill. The Vintners' manor was no exception. Sir Thomas Phillips' collection includes two maps, one of the proportion in general and the other of Bellaghy. The latter shows the castle of Sir Baptist Jones, in fact two stone buildings at right angles and two other walls forming a square, with two turreted towers at the ends of the buildings. Next to it stands the church and stretching down from the castle a street lined with solid timber-framed slate-roofed houses and ending in a few cottages. Phillips gives the names of those inhabiting the houses, fifteen in all, as William Deard, Robert Stevenson, Thomas Jones, Thomas Lewin, Ellis Okes, and 'not finished', on one side of the street, and on the other, Thomas Sparry, Eustace Bell, Robert King, William Coxe, Thomas West, Thomas Hutchin, 'void', and Henry Prettie. Apart from a few scattered buildings, unidentified and therefore probably barns and other outhouses and a mill, that was Bellaghy. The rest of the settlers lived outside the village. This, strictly speaking, contravened plantation rules, but on a manor comprising nearly fifty square miles, it was obviously impractical for all to live in the village, particularly since it was situated in one corner of the manor. In Pynnar's survey of 1618, the Vintners' fortification was one of only four deemed satisfactory. The responsibility for defence among the settlers usually devolved on the farmer of each manor. For instance in the Vintners' conveyance to Sir Baptist Jones in 1619, the latter undertook 'at his own costs and charges . . . to have and keep in and upon the premises afore demised such and so

many men furnished with Corslets, Pikes and Muskets, powder and shot and other armour and munition for service of his Majesty and for his and their own defence . . . as the said Company and the tenants and occupiers shall be charged or commanded to have in readiness to be showed at Musters.' In 1622 at the instance of the Irish Society, the companies sent over arms for their castles which were thereafter reasonably well-supplied.¹³

Since the companies had no experience of colonisation, it is hardly surprising that most of them preferred to farm their whole manors to one individual, and pass to him the responsibility of fulfilling the articles of the plantation. They then had very little dealing with the other tenants, and on the whole the farmers were considerably less responsible than the companies. The Vintners first farmed to John Rowley on 9 May 1616; he was the discredited agent of the Irish Society and died about a year later. In 1619 they farmed the manor to a partner of Rowley's, Baptist Jones, who has been described as a 'needy and grasping adventurer'. On his death in 1624, the lease eventually passed to his widow's second husband, Henry Conway. Each proportion was supposed to have six freeholders with sixty acres or more, each building his own premises, equipping himself and his family with arms. They were also expected to be resident for a term of years and not to sub-let to natives, but these requirements were not always adhered to. Much the same conditions bound leasehold tenants, but the majority of British tenants were men of small means, tradesmen, craftsmen, ex-soldiers, who were tenants by contract. There was no systematic immigration from London and the nucleus of the British settlement was already there when the companies took over their manors. They sent over small numbers of workmen to oversee the buildings and for the rest relied on voluntary emigration.

The main problem in the eyes of the Crown was, of course, the native Irish. They were about twice as numerous as the British in the county, of whom there were about 900 on the companies' manors and nearly 2,000 in the county as a whole. They were, however proportionately much more numerous in the south and east, where the Vintners' proportion lay, than further north. After 1619 the presence of natives on company land was an offence liable to a fine per native head. The companies, when farming their land, always took care to include a covenant against letting land to anyone who had not taken the Oath of Supremacy, that is, rejected the Roman Catholic faith in favour of the Church of England. In their lease to Baptist Jones, the vintners were even more explicit, and

included the clause 'that neither he the said Baptist Jones shall alyen, assign, demise or let the premises or any part thereof to any person or persons whatsoever natives born within the kingdom of Ireland . . . nor to any person or persons that shall not . . . have taken the oaths of Allegiance and Supremacy.' This done, they had little real control over Jones' actions and in general the pressures of market forces worked in favour of the Irish. They were already in possession of the land when the Vintners took over, and determined to remain. They owned large numbers of cattle which the British settlers needed to prevent them from starving, their living standards were low and they were subsequently able to offer much higher rents than the British. Since the Vintners did not have enough settlers to farm the entire manor and the Irish, unlike the British, did not involve them in extra outlay on building, the outcome was inevitable, and the Irish remained as an essential factor in the economic arrangements of the manor. Their willingness to pay high rents naturally pushed up the level of rents for the British, which, not surprisingly, led to ill feeling. The Vintners undoubtedly knew that both Jones and Conway were leasing land to natives, and considered it worth the payment of fines, for without the aid of Irish rents, the farmers could hardly have paid the Vintners anything at all.

Moody gives a table of comparison for the numbers of British settlers given by Pynnar's report of 1619, Phillips' report of 1622, the royal commission of 1623 and a muster roll of c.1630. The figures given for the Vintners' manor are 76, 80, 73 and 102, of which Phillips, in most other cases the most dubious, here seems reasonably accurate. The manor therefore always had more than the required minimum of able-bodied men, which was seventy-two. The building programme was adhered to as well, and the Vintners' fortifications were among the few deemed satisfactory. It was therefore solely on the question of the Irish tenants that the Company did not in fact comply with the plantation requirements, and even this is to some extent explained by the geographical position of the manor within the county. The difficulties experienced by the Vintners and the other companies were much the same as those of the other undertakers in Ulster, and their degree of success in grappling with the problems also similar. Unfortunately the Crown believed that the vast resources of the city of London would lead to a much greater degree of success. Its subsequent disappointment made it more willing to listen to Sir Thomas Phillips' charges of great abuses and vast profits laid at the door of the Londoners. Both were in fact untrue. The abuses, such as

they were, have been shown as very similar to those of all the Ulster undertakers, while the profits, widely believed to be considerable, can be shown from the companies' own records to be nothing of the sort.¹⁴

The management of the Vintners' manor was kept firmly in their hands. The inferior companies were called on for contributions, consulted over major decisions and paid their share of the profits, but that was all. This held true for all the manors. Most of the time the inferior companies co-operated fully, declaring themselves willing to abide by any decisions the Vintners' Court saw fit to take. In 1614 when they were called on to contribute towards the building costs, the Fruiterers' Company refused to comply, and was therefore excluded from the Irish affairs until 1621, when its representatives came to the Court and asked if they might retrieve their dividend from the Irish rents and profits if they paid their share of the building costs which they had hitherto refused. The Court agreed to accept them back into the association, but insisted that they pay not only their share, but interest on it from 1614. The actual day to day running of the Irish affairs, insofar as they concerned the Company, was handled by a committee chosen from the Court. For approximately the first ten years of the Company's involvement in Ireland, there was virtually no question of receipt at all, merely expenditure: expenditure on buildings, the payment of agents, the supply of arms, legal expenses and church building. Records of nine of the twelve companies contain details of their payments, which, it must be remembered, were on top of the sum of £60,000 which they had been compelled by the Crown to contribute and for which the land was compensation. The extra sum raised by the twelve companies was approximately £12,000 but individual contributions varied widely, from the Drapers' at £5,000, the Fishmongers at £3,000, the Salters and Mercers at £2,500 the Merchant Taylors at £2,000, the Ironmongers and Vintners at £1,500 (the Vintners' exact sum was £1,457), to the Goldsmiths £700 and the Grocers £200. These sums were small compared to the amount expended by the city's Irish Society on Derry, Coleraine and its lands, but the companies had contributed to that also. Further sums were spent by the farmers on buildings in each manor, and the Vintners reckoned that their tenants had spent £600 over and above the Company's expenditure. It is clear that the Vintners, therefore, were more conscientious in their expenditure than a number of their fellow companies, a fact apparent already from their ability to satisfy plantation requirements. It is also worth noting that the three companies who retained their manors and administered them

directly instead of farming them, the Mercers, Drapers and Ironmongers, all spent as much or more than the vintners.¹⁵

If this was the expenditure, what then was the companies' profit? Certainly nothing like Sir Thomas Phillips' estimate of over £150,000. Moody has calculated that the gross receipts for the years 1618-1634 were only £37,000, of which the Vintners received £1,926. This made their actual profit on the manor rather less than £500. Some companies did rather better; the Goldsmiths for instance made a profit of about £1,000, the Grocers of £1,800 and the Ironmongers of £1,500, but some like the Drapers showed a loss. Yet what profits were made were nothing like enough to balance the loss on the Irish Society property. The rough maximum profit on the manors was £15,000 against a loss of about £56,000 on the undivided land and the two major towns. The Vintners, therefore, received slightly more than they expended on the manor, but by 1634 when the Crown resumed the Irish lands they had seen virtually no return at all on the sum of more than £3,000 they had originally contributed, for which the manor was intended to compensate, hardly a fair reward for their diligence. Like most of the other proportions, Vintners' Manor was farmed at a reasonable rent, but as in all cases where evidence exists, their farmer was always in arrears. By 1634, Conway's arrears amounted to £394, and it was only under constant pressure that the latter made spasmodic payments of arrears due from his predecessor, which was the condition of his lease. The fact that all the companies farming their manors had similar problems indicates that the blame was not the Vintners' choice of farmer. The field of potential farmers was not wide and in most cases the arrears in rent were due to a genuine inability to pay. The causes for this were numerous, but chiefly could be laid at the door of miscalculation of costs, general misfortune and unexpected charges by the state.¹⁶

When money was received from Ireland, the Vintners' Irish committee had to decide how it should be paid out. The first indication that money was being paid in rather than paid out occurs in March 1620. On 20 March the committee met to decide how to repay money which had been laid out for Ireland. First they agreed to pay back all sums advanced by individual members above and beyond the original six assessments. There were fourteen members in this category, who were owed between £5 and £22. The committee also decided that the original assessments should be repaid, not from any returns from the manor but from dividends from the Irish Society, if the Company ever received any. The decision of

the Fruiterers' Company in June 1621 to make up for its former lack of co-operation is another strong indication that the manor was beginning to show some return. Details of the Company's difficulties with its tenants have already been given, but despite them, some of the rent was paid; it was not until 1627 that the first mention of a dividend from the Irish Society occurs. The dividend came from the profits of the county's two towns, Derry and Coleraine, such land as was not the property of the companies, and incidentals like the lucrative fishing rights on the River Bann. The amount first received by the Vintners was the substantial sum of £578.18s.8d. and the Irish committee then had to decide how to divide it up. The eventual division of the spoils was £361 to the Vintners and to the other companies sums between £93 and £7. This seeming disproportion between the share of the Vintners and those of the rest included repayment for a number of administrative costs, like the payment of agents, to which the other companies had not been asked to contribute.¹⁷

Although the city was condemned by the Court of Star Chamber to lose its Irish estates early in 1635, and in March of that year the Vintners received a letter from Sir John Bankes, the Attorney-General, requiring the surrender of the Company's deeds to its proportion, these and the patents of the Irish Society were not actually handed over until 1639. In the meantime certain committees of the Common Council were appointed to settle the differences between the king and the city. In answer to a precept from the Lord Mayor, the Vintners expressed the view that they were willing for their proportion, their fishing rights and their interest in Derry and Coleraine to be disposed of as the Common Council thought best for the good of the city. The matter ended, as stated before, with the sequestration of the Irish estates and the comparatively mild fine of £12,000. During the period of sequestration the Company was not entirely free of Irish affairs. In January 1638 they were petitioned by Thomas Church, their erstwhile agent, for four years' back salary, a matter of £40. The Company had thought highly enough of Church to give him a gift of £10 worth of plate four years previously and although the manor had been seized and they had received no profits in the intervening years, they gave him £20 for his diligent service in the past. In 1641 the Lord Mayor appealed for money for the relief of the Protestants of Londonderry 'sore distressed by rebels' during the Irish rebellion. After enquiring what the other companies intended to do, the Vintners gave £100. Two months later another precept asked for one or more

pieces of artillery for the relief of Londonderry. The inferior companies, when summoned to hear the precept, returned the short answer that they were simply not willing to contribute, so the Vintners provided a demi-culverin with a carriage and necessities without their aid. In June 1642 the livery companies raised a loan of £100,000 towards the relief of Ireland, but by this time it was clear that the Commons intended the city to regain its lands. In 1648 the clerk learned that the Company's deeds to its Irish estate had come into the possession of a Mr. Raworth of Gray's Inn. How he acquired them is not divulged, but he was willing to restore them to the Vintners for a nominal gratuity of thirty shillings provided the Company would covenant to produce them for him if he was ever questioned about them. There is no record of what the Court decided to do, but it probably accepted the offer.¹⁸

In 1650 when Cromwell had subdued the rebellion in Ireland, the city and the companies re-asserted their rights to their former estates, and for the Vintners to possess their original deeds was for them a stroke of luck. Two years later Henry Conway, their former tenant, appeared and the Company immediately claimed from him the rent they had not received from 1634 which at £120 per annum now amounted to £2,160. No doubt this was only a bargaining position, for it was arranged that Conway should meet a committee of the Court to settle affairs. Yet nothing further is heard of Conway for several years. It was not until 1655 that the Vintners' Company and its subsidiaries received new letters patent and could send over commissioners to settle matters in Ireland. By that date Sir John Clotworthy had taken an assignment of the Company's manor, presumably from Conway, and now desired either to buy it or take a long lease. It seems likely that the assignment was made without the Company's approval, and possibly without its knowledge, for its relations with Clotworthy seemed to be strained from the beginning. It demanded £90 due for three-quarters of a year's rent due from Mr. Conway for 1634 before the Court of Star Chamber judgement, which it felt should be paid before it treated any further. Clotworthy made it quite clear that in his view any arrears were due from Conway and not from himself and in turn asked that the Company do something about re-edifying their manor. The Company retorted that if he had not thought it worth £120 per annum he would not have taken it and he should therefore either pay the arrears or deliver up the lease. Conway's lease ran until 1672 but Clotworthy wanted a longer one for the admirable purpose of encouraging English tenants, but the Company did not feel in

a position to grant one until the commissioners returned from Ireland. Not until June 1657 were copies of the Company's Irish deeds delivered to the secretary to the Governor and Assistants of the Plantation of Ulster, so that a new deed could be drawn up to re-invest the Vintners with their manor. In August 1658 the Company appointed Captain Lawrence Cox its agent in Ireland and having learned from him that Sir John Clotworthy had made a considerable waste of the timber on the manor, the Court decided to press for all arrears of rent when the original lease to Conway expired, and refused to answer a letter from Clotworthy because he styled himself their tenant and they did not accept him as such.¹⁹

This brings to a rather abrupt end the dramatic portion of the history of the Vintners' estates in Ireland. Between 1659 and 1669 there is a gap in the records of the Court and exactly how the vexed question of the tenancy was resolved is not recorded. In 1669, however, the tenant was John Skeffington, 2nd Viscount Massareene.*

In November 1671 he began negotiating for a renewal of his lease through the agency of Sir Theophilus Biddulph. It was against Company policy at this date to consider renewing a lease until it was in its last year of the term, and this had three more years to run. Lord Massareene was told that he would be given first refusal as the sitting tenant. At least one other person was interested in taking the manor, and the Vintners had to decide whether they would set a rent and fine for the new lease or whether, as was the case for all their other property, they would let bidders make their own proposals. At the beginning of 1673 Sir Theophilus came with his lordship's first proposal: a sixty-one year lease at the old rent of £120 per annum, together with a fine of £1,200. The Company agreed to consider the proposal, but in view of the other interest expressed, the clerk, Edward Ange, was bidden to investigate the procedures used by the other companies and the sort of prices they commanded. The resulting general debate ended in a vote that the new lease be for not more than forty-one years, that the rent asked be £200 per annum and the fine £2,100. When informed of this resolution, Sir Theophilus accepted the increased rent on Lord Massareene's behalf, but bargained for a fine of £1,500 and a longer lease. After a long debate the Court agreed to a sixty-one year lease but held out for a fine of £2,000. This was accepted and Sir Theophilus gave three guineas to the poor box. There was in fact a long delay before Lord Massareene finally sealed his

*Sir John Clotworthy, cr. 1st Viscount Massareene, 1660, with remainder to his daughter Mary, her husband, Sir John Skeffington and their heirs.

lease and some minor objection he had necessitated a trip to Ireland by the clerk, with a £50 expense allowance, to sort out the details and get the lease sealed. Finally, in 1679 the Viscount and his son were admitted to the freedom and invited to that year's election dinner.²⁰

From the date at which the Company regained its Irish estates, they caused no more anxiety or trouble than any of its English property, a radical difference from the first thirty years of possession. The manor was always farmed out in its entirety and all the Company had to do was sit back and collect the rents, and the dividends which the Irish Society was now in a position to pay. From time to time small affairs occurred which had to be dealt with. In 1670 at the petition of the Bishop of Londonderry, the Governor and Assistants of the Plantation of Ulster agreed to increase the salary of the usher at the Londonderry school to £20 per annum. They were also anxious that the companies should interest themselves in sending over poor children to be educated there. The Vintners' Court approved this charitable aim and agreed to send over a child who would be allowed £8 per annum by the Company. In 1677 the Company purchased the interest of one of its inferior companies in the manor. The Woodmongers' Company had been dissolved in 1668 and its creditors were winding up its affairs. The Woodmongers had contributed £200 as its share in the plantation and had received its share of any profits in the meantime; the Vintners offered £220 for the share. The creditors initially refused asking £240 but settled for the smaller sum a few weeks later. They also received the Woodmongers' dividend on the rents. £500 was divided among the other companies in 1676 and three years later a full rendering to date was drawn up and the companies were paid all they were due, together with interest. The Court then resolved that the Irish account was to be kept quite separate from the Company's other accounts and that the inferior companies were to be paid their share of rents and dividends from time to time as they fell due.²¹

One of the companies associated with the Vintners in their proportion was not in fact an inferior company at all, but senior to the Vintners in the ranks of the twelve great companies. The Grocers' Company had contributed so much in the early part of the century that it had its own manor (with no other company associates) and a share in the Vintners' manor. This not unnaturally meant that the Grocers occasionally saw fit to take issue with the Vintners over their handling of affairs. Again there is a gap in the Company's court records from 1682 to 1705 and when they recommence all was not well in Ireland. Like every other tenant the

Company had had, Lord Massareene was in arrears with his rent.* So much so that the Company's agent, Mr. Connally, was in possession until they were paid. Lord Massareene, apparently, refused to consider paying any arrears due from before 1688. In December 1706 the clerk to the Grocers' Company appeared in court and demanded their share of the year's rent. Lord Massareene was now four and a half years behind with his rent, some £950, but the Vintners had continued to pay annual shares to the associated companies. It now felt it could no longer continue to do this until some at least of the arrears were paid. Reasonable as this would appear, the Grocers' Company objected. More than that, they took action. Early in 1707 Renter Warden Fisher informed the Court that he had called on the Treasurer of the Irish Society with a warrant for the payment of a £50 dividend, only to be faced with a refusal by the Society because Mr. Ravenhill, clerk to the Grocers' Company, had put a stop to the payment. No comment is made in the Court minutes on this action and no further information occurs on the fate of the dividend. The following year's dividend was collected and divided among the companies as usual. In June 1708, Mr. Ravenhill informed the Vintners' Irish committee that he knew of someone willing to purchase Lord Massareene's lease, pay off the arrears and pay a further £300 fine if the lease was extended to sixty-one years. In addition he would give a security for the payment of his rent in London. Naturally the Vintners, in view of the Grocers' previous action, did not show themselves over eager to investigate this offer. More than six months elapsed before they wrote to their agent Connally informing him of the offer of Charles Campbell, esquire, of Dublin and asking him for his opinion on the character of Campbell, the value of the estate as he, Connally, saw it, and the size of fine he recommended for the desired extension of the lease. A summons then went out to the other companies to discuss the proposals. The meeting ended with the usual decision to abide by what the Vintners and their agent thought best. Shortly afterward Mr. Peter Short appeared on behalf of Mr. Campbell; he desired an account of the arrears due by Lord Massareene from 1688 and offered a fine of one and a half years' rent.²²

Lord Massareene, meanwhile had filed a suit in Chancery against the Company, which the latter was determined to defend. Campbell, anxious to secure the lease, offered a fine of £500 together with all the arrears, and suggested the lease be left in a third party's hands until the legal differences were settled. Unfortunately for Campbell, legal opinion

*This was now Clotworthy Skeffington, son of the second Viscount.

was strongly in favour of the Company and its present tenant coming to some sort of terms. Apart from the question of arrears, money was due in lieu of the two fat bucks with which he should have supplied the Company annually, valued at £12 per annum. The Company claimed £120 for them, and £46 towards legal costs as well as £500 in arrears. It did forgive Lord Massareene for three years' rent during the war between James II and his Catholic supporters and William III's victorious Protestants. Initially his lordship was willing to pay only £200 of the arrears, but gradually he came round and promised the full sum after he had been granted repossession. This the Company accepted but it felt it did require further security for the punctual payment of rent in the future. All this negotiating spanned several years and it was not until February 1713 that Mr. Connally was finally ordered to render possession again to Lord Massareene and accept payment of the arrears. The Company insisted on the payment of accruing rent according to the covenants in the lease. The future payment of rent by Lord Massareene, however, was made irrelevant by his death the following month. He was succeeded as tenant by the Vintners' own agent, William Connally.²³

William Connally had in fact become an increasingly important man in Irish affairs. By 1729 he was one of the Lords Justice of Ireland and Speaker of the Irish Commons. For the first time in the hundred year history of their manor, the Vintners had no trouble with the payment of rent. In 1729, although the expiry date of his lease was some years away, Connally proposed that he purchase the fee simple of the manor for £6,000 and continue to pay an annual rent of £200 and two fat bucks, rather than take a further lease. His reason was very simple. His tenants had all threatened to give notice unless he made their several tenures fee farms, and this he could not do unless the fee was vested in himself. Connally himself received £450 per annum in Irish money rents and if the Vintners did not agree to invest him with the fee, he proposed a new sixty-one-year lease paying the same rent of £200 per annum with a fine of £2,000. The Company's first move in answer to this surprising proposition was to have their entire estate surveyed by Mr. Sloan for the cost of £100. Mr. Richardson meanwhile, on behalf of Connally, increased his purchase offer first to £13,000, more than double his first proposal, and then to £15,000. In view of this, the Company found it very difficult to refuse. A meeting of the Masters and Wardens of the inferior companies agreed to abide by the decision of the Vintners' Court, and that body accepted Mr. Richardson's final offer of £5,000

to be paid immediately by Mr. Connally and a further £10,000 when his lease expired in 1734. Until that date the Company would pay Connally five per cent interest on his downpayment. The rent of £200 per annum and two fat bucks was to continue unchanged. On 19 August 1729 the articles of agreement were sealed and the £5,000 paid; this was immediately divided among the associated companies. When the final deed was drawn up, as late as 1737, long after Connally had paid the balance of his account, he asked that the Irish Society might be a party to it. The Society agreed to this, and in January 1738 the conveyances were sealed at the Society's chambers at Guildhall, and the Company paid the Society's clerk thirty guineas for his trouble in the affair. Their own clerk, William Bedell, who in 1744 was himself elected clerk to the Irish Society, received no less than £250 as a bonus for his 'great and diligent work' in arranging the sale and drawing up the accounts. When the deeds had been sealed the Company arranged for the division of the spoils, £10,000 plus £1,929.10s.6d. in interest and rent, minus of course the Vintners' cash and charges, among the interested companies. The Grocers received £2,212.12s.5d., the Weavers £392.12s.2d., the Poulterers, Plumbers and Bricklayers £314.1s.8d. each, the Blacksmiths £251.5s.4d. and the Curriers £172.15s.0d., a total of £3,971.10s.5d., leaving the Vintners with the balance of £7,958 minus all the costs of the sale. The Company then gave a dinner in the Hall for Mr. Connally and the Society.²⁴

In May 1740 the Weavers' Company expressed their willingness to sell their share of the rent and Irish Society dividends for £210 and the Vintners agreed to purchase. Later in the same year they and the eleven other major companies agreed to give up their rights over trees and timber on their lands to the Irish Society. Mr. Connally was succeeded as tenant by his nephew and the rent continued to be steadily paid. Dividends of the rent and the Irish Society payments were not made every year to the other companies, but approximately every four years.

The eighteenth century therefore saw the ample repayment of money and effort expended by the companies in Ireland during the seventeenth century, long after such return was surely despaired of. The Company continued to receive its share of the rent-charge, valued at £146.7s.5d. by the Royal Commission for the year 1879-80, until the early twentieth century. By this time the alteration in money values meant that the rent-charge was far less valuable to the Company, and since it had again been having trouble with its tenant, who at one time owed as much as £1,810, the decision was taken to sell the rent-charge in 1908 and finally sever the

Irish connection. The purchaser was the Irish Land Commission and the price paid in three instalments was £1,542. The Vintners' role in Ireland may, in the last analysis, be summed up in the terms used by the Royal Commission to evaluate the livery companies' general position vis-à-vis county Londonderry: 'Nothing can be more admirable than the conduct of the Companies with respect to these Ulster lands. They found them a desert, and by their care and munificence they have made them one of the most prosperous parts of the United Kingdom.'²⁵

Chapter VII



The Fire of London and its Aftermath

I

For the London livery companies, the Fire of London in 1666, according to Herbert, was the 'consummation of their miseries', the culmination of a period of 'intolerable exaction, spoliation and calamity', which had lasted from the outbreak of the Civil War in 1640. He might, with justification, have extended this period further back to the early years of the seventeenth century, when the city first became entangled with Ireland. The companies' resources, already depleted by this, were strained to breaking point by the loans demanded by both Crown and Parliament in the period 1640-1643 and by the cost of defending London. Less than a quarter of the capital advanced by the companies was ever repaid, and not a penny in interest. The companies were not poor, but in many cases their wealth was more apparent than real. Much of their property was held in trust for charitable uses and they depended on their membership for the greater part of their disposable income. When members became recalcitrant over repeated requests for money, the companies were reduced to selling their plate and mortgaging their trust property. The Vintners' financial straits in the mid-seventeenth century have already been described. Before the restoration of Charles II to his throne in 1660, men were already making determined efforts to avoid taking up the freedom, and if already freemen, to shun the livery. There can be no doubt that membership had become a financial burden and the holding of office a positive hardship. Nor did the period of greater stability ushered in by the Restoration do much to improve matters. Before the return of the king from his exile, General Monck, the man largely responsible for Charles' peaceful restoration, visited a number of the companies. He accepted an invitation to dine with the Vintners on 12 April 1660 and presumably received their warm support, as well as a good dinner and a

musical entertainment. Although all but the most fanatical opponents of the Crown welcomed the return of Charles II, the festivities which greeted him had to be paid for, and once again it was the companies who footed the bill. The gift of £12,000 presented by the city to the king and his brother, the Duke of York (later James II), came almost entirely from the companies' coffers.¹

The Vintners' Court minutes for the period 1659–1669 are missing, so that details of the early years of the Restoration and of the immediate effect of the fire have to be sought elsewhere. The year 1666 began as a triumph for the Company. For the first time in the seventeenth century, one of its members was Lord Mayor. Sir Thomas Bloodworth was the son of John Bloodworth, a wealthy Turkey merchant who had been Master of the Company in 1641. He entered the Company, not by patrimony, but by his apprenticeship to Martin Linton in 1643, and served as Master in 1659 (not 1665 as stated by Milbourn and repeated elsewhere). He continued his father's trade connections with Turkey, specialising in timber, and by the time of the Restoration he was a rich man with a reputed income of £3,000 per annum. His civic career had been equally successful. During the Civil War he had been colonel of two of the city's regiments of trained bands, and in 1660 was elected Member of Parliament for Southwark. He was appointed to the aldermanic bench in 1658, first for Dowgate Ward, then Portsoken and finally Aldersgate, and served as sheriff in 1662–3 before becoming Mayor in 1665. A fellow-royalist described him as 'a zealous person in the king's concernments; willing, though it may be, not very able, to do great things'. His zeal obtained him a knighthood in the Hague in May 1660, whence he had gone to form part of the king's escort home. Thus by 1666 Sir Thomas was wealthy, respected and in royal favour. Unfortunately for his posthumous image he had the misfortune not to impress Samuel Pepys, whose diary contains several unflattering comments on the Lord Mayor. The Secretary to the Admiralty's first brush with the Mayor ('a silly man, I think') came in June 1666 and left Pepys with the opinion, which he never revised, that Bloodworth was 'a mean man of understanding and dispatch of any public business'.²

The fire which broke out in the early hours of Sunday morning, 2 September 1666, at first appeared to be merely one of those periodic outbursts to which a largely timber-built city was inevitably prone. An hour or so after it started Sir Thomas was roused from his slumbers and visited the scene, but had no reason to believe it would be worse than

many another fire. His famous remark when first surveying it, 'Pish, a woman might piss it out' would probably not have been far off the mark, but for one unfortunate circumstance. The fire progressed in parallel lines down Pudding Lane and Fish Street Hill until it reached Thames Street. Here the streets and lanes above London Bridge were occupied by wharfingers, whose cellars and warehouses were packed with oil, hemp, tallow, wine, etc. All of this area therefore went up like a torch. Soon after dawn it was suggested to Sir Thomas that fire breaks should be formed by destruction of houses in the path of the fire. The Mayor hesitated. He was far from all-powerful and had severe qualms about who would compensate the owners of the houses. In the end he agreed provided the owners consented. Ninety-nine mayors out of a hundred would have felt much the same scruples and the hundredth would have been the man of clear vision, great powers of leadership and decision of mind who could have saved London that day. About noon the business of making fire breaks was begun, but they were too small and too close to the fire to be effective. It was Pepys, one of the few men of the court whose home was in the city, who took the news to the king. Charles was not a man lacking in decision in an emergency and Pepys was sent back with orders to the Mayor to spare no man's house but to pull them down in all directions before the fire. In Pepys' own words, 'At last met my Lord Mayor in Canning Street, like a man spent, with a handkerchief about his neck. To the King's message he cried, like a fainting woman, "Lord, what can I do? I am spent, people will not obey me. I have been pulling down houses, but the fire overtakes us faster than we can do it."' ³

In the afternoon, the king and the Duke of York came down the river to Three Cranes Wharf by the Vintners' Hall to view the progress of the fire. They left Lord Craven to assist the Mayor and the city magistrates, but there was no more official concern that day. Sir Thomas was left with a few soldiers, a wholly inadequate support, to muddle through the night. That Sunday night, the Vintners' Hall, their almshouses, wharf and tackle-houses burned. The Company saved its plate and its records and there was no loss of life but in the morning all that was left was a pile of rubble and some chimney stacks. Three other halls along the line of Thames Street, the Plumbers', which the Vintners owned, the Joiners' and the Parish Clerks' burned with it. Across Thames Street, the fire spread to the Church of St. Martin in the Vintry and its neighbour, St. James Garlickhithe. By ten on the Monday morning, a hot September day, it had reached Queenhithe, the port of half London. The dock made a deep indentation in the

river bank and had an open market space beyond, and the city authorities had great hopes of finally checking the fire here. They stripped the market and pulled down houses, but the fire made a great leap over the space of twenty houses to the turret of a house in Thames Street and thence raced unchecked towards Baynard's Castle. The destruction that day included St. Paul's Cathedral and Guildhall. Finally the Crown took action. The Mayor was set aside and overall direction placed in the hands of the Duke of York. Members of the Privy Council and other men of importance were placed in charge of fire posts, spread out like a fan in advance of the fire. Parish constables were ordered to attend the nearest one with a hundred men, and thirty foot soldiers were sent to each under an office and three Justices of the Peace aided him in directing operations. The Lords Lieutenant of Middlesex, Surrey, Kent and Hertfordshire were ordered to call up their militia to relieve the soldiers and citizens at night. The most beneficial work done in stamping out the fire and saving what was left of London, however, was done by seamen called up from the docks at Deptford and Woolwich. It was Pepys' own idea that they be used, since he wished to save the Navy Office in Seething Lane. The seamen used powder to blow up houses as rapidly as possible, but they were not called in until the fire was largely spent. On the Wednesday morning, when most of the fire was under control, Sir Thomas reappeared from the shadows to which he had been relegated since Sunday, and took over the supervision of pulling down large numbers of houses.

In the following months public opinion continued to run against the Mayor, and in private, Pepys' pen continued severe. On 7 September he wrote, 'People all the world over do cry out at the simplicity of my Lord Mayor in general; and more particularly in this business of the fire, laying it all upon him.' In December, 'I met my late Lord Bloodworth, under whom the City was burned. But, Lord! the silly talk that this silly fellow had, only how ready he would be to part with all his estate in these difficult times to advocate the King's service, and complaining that now, as everybody did lately in the fire, everybody endeavours to save himself, and let the whole perish: but a very weak man he seems to be.' It is also clear that Sir Thomas himself was aware of the general dissatisfaction caused by his failure to deal adequately with the crisis. On 29 September, he wrote to Williamson, editor of the *Gazette* (after criticism of him had appeared therein), that he was forced to vindicate himself at the election of his successor, and further, that he lived not by popular applause, yet wished some esteem in the government, and needed some support,

having had the misfortune to serve in the severest year that ever man did. The Vintners, on the other hand, by the showing of the court books that survive, never failed to treat Sir Thomas with the respect and distinction due to one of the most senior company members.

Yet if Bloodworth had not turned out to be the man for the hour, the crisis did in fact throw up a leader, or rather two, the king and his brother, whose foresight, decision and sheer physical labour did much to save what was left of the city. Although much more might have been saved if they had taken control of events sooner, the two secured for themselves in those few days, a place in the affection of Londoners that subsequent events never entirely destroyed. A citizen, John Rushworth, commented at the time that 'if the Lord Mayor had done as much, his example might have gone far towards saving the city'. Yet Sir Thomas was not entirely to blame in his lack of action. He was surely aware of the ancient city law that any man destroying another's house should have the charge of rebuilding it, and he was obstructed in the vital job of making fire breaks during the early spread of the fire by certain wealthy merchants, described by the diarist John Evelyn as 'tenacious, avaricious men, Aldermen etc. who would not permit it because their houses must have been the first'. This made it essential for the Mayor to have the authority of the King in Council before he could overrule them. Sir Thomas' fault lay in not obtaining this authority quickly and wielding it firmly. The only consolation lay in the fact that the obstructive merchants had their houses burnt anyway. So had Sir Thomas. His house at that time was in Gracechurch Street, and that he suffered considerable financial loss from the 'dreadful Fire of London', is stated in his will. Both the sheriffs had also lost their homes and all three were invited to lodge in Sir Thomas Gresham's house in Bishopsgate Street, which had survived and which was to become the temporary centre of civic affairs. The destruction had been truly terrible. Forty-four livery halls had gone – only seven survived – and eighty-four churches, including the two with vintners' connections. St. Martin, unlike St. James, was not rebuilt, and the two parishes were united. The Vintners had lost almost all their property. The only estates which continued to produce rents were those in Kent at Gravesend and Boxley and, of course, Vintners' Manor in Ireland.⁴

II

In August 1669, John Evelyn spent 'almost the entire day in surveying the ruinous city' and noted that it had 'now begun a little to revive after its sad calamity'. At first glance it might appear strange that three years after the fire, very little rebuilding had begun. In fact immediately after the fire, the energies of London had gone into ensuring that the city continued to function, that people had some sort of shelters to live in, that markets opened, that the courts functioned and some sort of accommodation was provided for prisoners, and that the city government continued as best it might. Then came the planning and raising of money for rebuilding. There was never any question that a new London would rise from the ashes of the old and Londoners were determined to keep everyday life going; only a tiny proportion of the refugees migrated permanently. During the period that they were without their Hall, it seems only natural that the Vintners should have met in taverns owned by members; the Bell in St. Nicholas' Lane, the Fleece in Cornhill and the Swan in Bishopsgate Street, all presumably survivors of the fire, served as meeting places for the Court. The latter appointed a committee to deal with the rebuilding of the Hall, which included the Master and Wardens *ex officio*, Mr. Thomas Werge, Mr. Thomas Benson, Capt. Nicholas Colbourne and Mr. Samuel Hall. The onerous post of treasurer to the committee was filled by Mr. John Billingsley who kept the Bell Tavern where the Vintners met; he was Master in 1679.⁵

The problems of financing the rebuilding were manifold. The Court raised as much in straight loans as it dared, appealed to members for subscriptions, and raised its fees. The fee for presenting apprentices was put up to 15s.od., with a similar sum for admitting freemen. Not until 1675 did the court order the fees to revert to 2s.6d. and 3s.4d. respectively, together with the appropriate fees for the clerk and beadle. Another expedient was the sale of Company plate. Most of it, basins and ewers, cups, tankards, salt cellars, bowls and spoons, went to a single purchaser, Major Wallis, for £300.4s.od., while Mr. Moses Meares took the remainder for £25.14s.3d. Even the rubble which was all that remained of the old Hall, was put to good use and sold, but it was on subscriptions from its members that the Company relied to a very large extent. Some, like Jonathan Barford, William Roberts and Thomas Werge gave as much as £50, others what they could down to a single pound. Philip

Hinton, the Company's clerk, who died in April 1672 left £100 towards the rebuilding fund. It was one thing, however, to get promises of subscriptions and quite another to collect them in cash. In July 1671 the Court of Assistants ordered a note of promised subscriptions to be made and steps taken to see the money was collected, with Mr. Billingsley keeping an account of what was received and what paid out to the workmen. Those members who had not yet subscribed anything were ordered to do so now and pay their money. That money was particularly short at this period is clear from the order given the Wardens to collect the quarterage 'with all convenience', and three months later, Richard Matthews, the upper beadle, was ordered to gather up all money owing for quarterage and 'what is behind of the subscriptions for the hall', with an authorisation under the Company seal.⁶

The Court also took advantage of the reluctance of its members to take the livery or hold office. An example typical of many was Mr. Simonds in July 1671, who 'desired to give £5 towards building the hall and so is excused the livery until next year'. In 1676 John Hill, elected one of the younger Wardens, announced he was a king's servant and thus could not be compelled to serve; he was discharged with a fine of £20 to the rebuilding fund. In February 1676, the Court took exception to the accounts of the late Renter Warden, Joseph Walbanke, and when he prayed for further time to settle the matter he was given until the next court to hand over the balance of the money to the present Renter Warden. Although he duly paid the money, the Court promptly fined him £20 for his 'exorbitant expenses out of the Company stock', and for good measure, went on to fine the Master and other Wardens who had served with him £10 apiece, because they must have known of the extravagance and condoned it. On appeal the late Master and Upper Warden had their fines remitted when they convinced the Court they had indeed warned the Renter Warden and he and the Corn Warden then had £5 each remitted from their fines provided they gave £5 to the rebuilding fund, a clear case of giving with one hand and taking away with the other.⁷

The old Hall had been built primarily of wood and plaster, but the spacious and elegant building that replaced it was of brick – a pattern that was to be repeated all over the city. The rebuilding committee did not employ an architect, a profession at this date generally concerned only with the grandest of public and private buildings, but worked with designs put forward by the master craftsmen engaged in the building work, principally Roger Jarman, the carpenter, Mr. Lem, the bricklayer, and

Mr. Hammond, the mason. In this way plans could be altered and modified as the work progressed; for instance, in July 1672 the committee was debating whether to have a kitchen, larder and other offices built into the great vault under the hall. On consultation with Mr. Jarman and Mr. Lem it was decided that it could be safely and conveniently done and the work went ahead. The hall itself was naturally the object of all the Company's earliest efforts. Quite apart from being the symbol of its corporate spirit, it was highly inconvenient to be without it. In September 1670 the Vintners received a precept from the Mayor asking them to foregather in their Hall and proceed as a company to Guildhall for the mayoral elections of that year. Since the Hall was not ready, a hastily convened Court had to decide that the Company should meet at the Sun in Milk Street and thence proceed to Guildhall. At last on 6 June 1671 the clerk, Philip Hinton was able to preface his minutes to the Court held on that day with the words 'At Vintners' Hall, laud' deo' (Thank God).⁸

The new Hall was built parallel to Upper Thames Street, and as the work went on it was clear that the new complex of buildings would occupy a larger site than Guy Shulldham's buildings. The piece of land fronting on to Thames Street itself had formerly been leased to Thomas Browne; now the lease was surrendered, and two wings were added at either end of the Hall, so that the whole complex formed three sides of a square facing on to Thames Street.⁹ After the main part of the Hall was complete, work went ahead with the west wing which contained the parlour or court room adjoining the hall, and a house for the clerk at the end nearest the road. By February 1671, before the Hall was ready to be occupied, the parlour was far enough advanced for the Court to order it to be roofed with 'good Kentish tiles', but it was not until the following January that planks were ordered for its floor, the clerk being left to choose where he could get the best value. A few months later the kitchens were put in under the hall and Mr. Symes, the joiner, submitted plans for wainscoting the hall itself. These were 'well-liked' and he was told to go ahead, while the plasterer put in hand its plastering according to the prepared design. In April 1673 the stonecutter was paving the courtyard in front of the hall, and then the hall with black and white stones. In September 1673 the Court decided to set up pillars at the gateway into the courtyard, which had previously been enclosed with a brick wall along its open side, and a little later Mr. Jarman, the carpenter, was requested to make a handsome pair of gates. In January 1674, the Court learned of some

stone rails and banisters to be sold at York Street in the Strand, and thinking they would do for coping the front walls, authorised their purchase if they could be had for 5s.od. per foot. At the same time the Court authorised building to go ahead with the east wing. This was to contain a tackle house for the wine porters which was to be fourteen feet clear within, with an office for the public business of the Company behind it, adjoining the upper beadle's house which in turn adjoined the end of the Hall. The house for the upper beadle, Richard Matthews, had been begun in January 1672, despite the fact that Mr. Billingsley complained he had not cash enough for it and was much out of purse on the building generally. The under beadle, Philip Huffa, was to be accommodated with lodgings above the tacklehouse, and the Company's cellars were built in beneath it.¹⁰

The new Vintners' Hall did not escape from the building disputes of the time. It might have been supposed that London would have found difficulty in acquiring the labour necessary to rebuild a city but this was not in fact so. Its level of wages was higher than elsewhere and there was no general building boom to keep provincial workmen at home. Those in the building trade had always travelled more than others and London was regarded as providing a superior training. The influx of men from elsewhere in the country brought problems in its wake. The London journeymen found themselves swamped by 'foreigns' as skilful as themselves but considerably less bothered about the niceties of the divisions between crafts that prevailed in the city, used as they were to less minute specialisation. Master craftsmen might in the past have paid close attention to the divisions, but with all the profits to be made and customers competing for their work, they were more likely to employ a willing 'foreign' than a scrupulous journeyman. An example of a demarcation dispute occurred at the Vintners' new Hall in July 1672. Mr. Symes, the joiner employed by the Company, objected to the fact that Mr. Jarman, the carpenter, had made the door cases for the Hall, which he considered to be joiner's work. The Court naturally felt obliged to uphold other companies' regulations, and since in 1632 the Joiners and Carpenters had settled their perennial disputes with a long and detailed adjudication of the work to be done by each, which firmly placed door cases under the auspices of the Joiners, it was not difficult for them to decide. They therefore ordered Mr. Symes to pay Mr. Jarman 40s. for the damage he had sustained by the work he had already provided, and then dispose of the stuff as he pleased before making the door cases himself. Mr. Jarman was reproved for doing

the work without orders and told in future he was not to meddle with any joiner's work at the Hall.¹¹

By 1675 almost all the rebuilding on the Thames Street site had been completed, and next project which faced the Company was the rebuilding of the almshouses. These had originally been close to the old Hall, conveniently situated for the almspeople to take part in corporate activities, but the enlarged site required for the new Hall, coupled with the fact that there was no real need for them to be there, led the Court to decide to build the new ones elsewhere. It was originally planned to have them on land the Company owned at Blackfriars, for in July 1672 when the Company's tenants there sought to use extra land to enlarge their yards, the Court decided that to let them have it would spoil the design for the intended almshouses. But it was not until the end of 1675 that the Court requested the Master and Wardens to 'prosecute with effort that good work begun in getting subscriptions towards rebuilding the almshouses and wainscotting of the hall'. The money thus collected, the Court directed, was to be used for no other purpose. M^r. Lem, the bricklayer, was requested to draw up the designs and all that remained to be decided was the site. The Blackfriars site had been let for building, and in January 1676 the Court was debating whether to take a plot of land in Mile End or wait for somewhere more convenient. A month later they briefed counsel to enquire into the title of the Mile End land and despite a flaw found in it, went ahead and contracted for it in March, including in the contract a covenant against all persons with a claim to the land.¹² This decision probably reflects the Company's financial state at the time. Blackfriars and other sites of their own nearby could be used to raise money in fines and rents, while the almshouses would consume money rather than produce it. Any central London site would be costly, while further out at Mile End, it might be had much more reasonably. That the almsfolk looked with disfavour on the unfashionable and inconvenient site for their new homes is clear by a report to the Court in August 1676 that, although the almshouses were ready for occupation, the almsfolk and pensioners were reluctant to take up residence. With a sharpness that seems justified, the Court ordered any of them who did not move in within 14 days to be expelled from their position and others elected in their place. Presumably this had the desired effect, and a few months later the Court increased the pensions to the almsfolk to 52s. per annum to be paid weekly by the beadle at the almshouses. The building had been financed largely by the subscriptions from members, the

shortfall the Court had ordered to be taken out of the Company's stock.¹³

Building on the rest of the Company's land was largely privately financed. The Company granted building leases to tenants, who recouped their outlay by receiving extended tenancies. Most of those granted were for sixty-one years. For instance, Mr. Whaplett attended the Court in April 1670 to arrange about rebuilding his house in Fetter Lane. It was agreed that he should have his old lease extended so that it now ran for sixty-one years, he paying the arrears of rent and the old rent during the remainder of his old lease and £12 per annum for the term added. Occasionally the Company laid down building specifications. When Alderman Sir Robert Hanson applied for a lease of land in Garlick Hill, the Court agreed to lease it to him provided he 'lay out £2,000 and build a house fit for an Alderman, backwards, and other good and substantial houses fronting the street'. In September 1671 the Court was forced to petition the judges that the annuities payable by them to various hospitals and parishes under the will of Richard Jacob, chargeable on a house formerly standing in Eastcheap, should be reduced by a third for the next forty years. Private citizens, however, were very often much better off than the companies. Unlike the latter, most of whose wealth lay in property for which they were only trustees, private persons, lacking the alternatives available for investment in later centuries, kept a good proportion of their savings at home, in cash or plate and jewels. These proved easy to save from the fire, and although they lost their homes they still had the wherewithal to rebuild them.¹⁴

By 1675 therefore, the Company had reason to be proud. It had borne its share in the rebuilding of London. On all its property, houses were being completed, each with the Company's arms carved in stone set up on the front as the Court had ordered, and the new Hall had risen from the ashes of the old, yet far more splendid. The Companies' Halls were the first of the larger buildings to be restored and most were completed and occupied before work started on the public buildings and long before a single church was rebuilt. Yet for the Vintners, as for many other companies, the splendour of their new Hall rested on heavy liabilities and the repayment of its loans took the better part of its revenues in the succeeding years.

The final trial for the livery companies in the seventeenth century came at the end of the reign of Charles II and affected them all equally. It was an attack chiefly on the city of London in an attempt to abolish

opposition to the Crown's increasingly arbitrary use of power. The result of the *quo warranto* proceedings against the city in 1684 was the forfeiture of its charter. By this means the king's ministers hoped to be able to pack the Common Hall with their supporters and in due time do likewise with the House of Commons, the majority of whom were burgesses; for if London could lose its privileges, no other city or town could regard itself as safe. The forfeiture of the city's charter was followed by similar writs of *quo warranto* issued to the companies. In a number of cases, realising the futility of resistance, companies voluntarily surrendered their charters. Since the court books of the Vintners are missing for this date, the exact attitude of the Court cannot be ascertained, but it is unlikely to differ markedly from that of their colleagues in the other major companies. In granting new charters to each of the companies, the king achieved his aim of controlling the election of officers, assistants and clerks. The names of all were first to be submitted to the king and, if approved, they had to then take oaths of allegiance, and take the sacrament according to the form prescribed for the Church of England. If the names were not approved, the assistants had to submit new names, and the king reserved the right to remove any officer, assistant or clerk by order of Privy Council. The Wardens and commonalty were to be subject to the Lord Mayor and Court of Aldermen, who were themselves to be appointed by the Crown, and who were to approve of all persons admitted to the livery. This humiliating situation lasted for only four years. In 1688, with the news of the coming of the Prince of Orange, James II prepared to make restitution and repeal all the restrictions following the *quo warranto* proceedings. His abdication and the establishment on the throne of his daughter, Mary, and her husband, William of Orange, saw the restoration of the privileges and immunities of both the city and the companies. The brief hiatus was as if it had never been and the companies were able to move forward with tranquillity into the eighteenth century.¹⁵

Chapter VIII



The Vintners in the Eighteenth Century

I

If the Vintners' Company, like many of its fellows, entered the eighteenth century burdened with debt, it had some consolations. This time the debts were incurred on its own behalf and not for the Crown or Parliament. They could at least enjoy the pleasures of their new Hall while they paid off the loans that financed it. In the financial year 1664-5 which preceded the Fire, their rents (excluding Ireland) came to £674.10s 4d. and their total receipts £5,973.19s.3d., which included new loans of £3,800. £2,000 of this was lent to the king, as part of £10,000 advanced him by the City Chamber on the security of the Hearth Tax, and £2,800 went towards paying off debts. Otherwise, the Company's expenditure was pared to the bone; apart from gratuities to its officials and £10 on repairs, only £91.17s.9d. was spent on dinners and meetings, including £30 on the Lord Mayor's Day dinner and £35 on Robert Gale's lenten feast (see p. 219). Ordinary payments to the almshouses, on annuities and quitrents totalled £211, and the Company balanced its books with £20 or so in hand. It is thus clear that the Vintners had nothing in hand to tide them over the disaster of the Fire. In 1666 the income from rent was only £98, half of it from the Kent properties at Gravesend and Wavering, the rest presumably due for the two months or so of the financial year before the Fire. Each following year, however, saw the rent total slowly creeping up. For 1670-1 it was £442, more than half the pre-Fire total. Most of the fines for the rebuilding leases went towards the repayment of loans, as did a welcome £500 from Lord Massareene in 1674. Individual members' contributions made up quite a substantial percentage of the whole. For instance, in 1674-5, when the total income was just over £2,200, £68 was paid in quarterage and nineteen livery fines at £31 each were levied, though not all were paid in full that year.¹

In the last few years of the seventeenth century, the Company's debts totalled £8,800, but rents were now higher than they had been before the Fire (in 1696-7 they were £936.6s.8d., excluding Ireland) and with heavy livery and Wardens' fines (in the same year totalling more than £600) they were able to cope. Increased expenditure on dinners, for instance £56 on the Lord Mayor's dinner and £75 on the Election dinner, indicate the general easing of circumstances. They were still heavily in debt, but now no further demands were being made on them and as long as nothing untoward happened, they knew that in time the debts could be cleared. By 1706-7 the interest paid on the Company debts was down to £410 per annum, and twenty years later it was down still further to £220, on a total debt of £4,450. In other words, thirty years after the Fire the debt had been £8,800, sixty years after it, in 1726-7, this sum had been halved. Ten years after that, in 1736-7, the debt was halved again to £2,200 and in another decade, not only were there no more debts, but the Company was receiving interest on an investment of £6,200 bank annuities. This was largely the profits from the sale of the fee simple of Vintners' Manor in Ireland, but one other factor must be taken into account for this swift financial recovery. The rebuilding leases granted on all the Company's property after the Fire were for sixty-one years at a low rent; and most, though not all, were granted in the late 1660s and early 1670s, so that they fell due for renewal in the early 1730s. By this date the growth of London had much enhanced the value of property, so that the new fines and rents could be made substantially higher than the old. By 1731, with much of the property re-let, the Court noted that their estate had improved from £856.10s. to £1,133.16s.8d., and fines levied so far amounted to £478.10s.; these figures exclude Ireland.²

Some property, of course, came back into the Company's hands before the original sixty-one year leases expired. New leases were not granted for longer than twenty-one years. In January 1712, the Company granted to Mr. Bartholomew Clarke a new lease of the 'great House on Garlick Hill', that built by Alderman Sir Robert Hanson at a cost of £2,000. £485.18s.7d. was spent on repairs, some of which was the responsibility of the Vintners, but £206.3s.0½d. was for ornamentation and beautification and was therefore to be paid for by Clarke and not the Company. The rent to be charged was £85 per annum, a very substantial sum indeed, and Mr. Clarke was allowed to retain the first £270 of it to cover the cost of repairs. The general procedure when a tenant wished to renew a lease was for the Company to inspect the property and estimate the cost of

putting it into good repair. Occasionally so much needed to be done that as at a house in Paternoster Row in 1738, it was simpler to demolish it and start again. Sometimes, if the tenant was willing, he undertook to have the repairs done, and like Mr. Clarke, was allowed their cost out of future rent. For the renewal of a lease or the granting of a new one, the Company continued their pre-Fire policy of asking the tenant or prospective tenant what rent clear of taxes and what fine they were prepared to offer. Sometimes the first offer was refused, and they were sent away to raise their terms and sometimes the final offer was rejected. If no prospective tenant was forthcoming, the clerk was responsible for the posting of bills advertising the house or houses to be let. In these cases the Court usually took the best offer made, though preference might be given to a Company member or an existing tenant. They were, however, careful about letting property to any man who was not known to them personally. For instance, in 1756 Thomas Phillips responded to the Company's advertisement to let some of its houses on repairing leases, and since none of the Assistants knew him by repute, discreet enquiries were set afoot. The minutes do not say what was discovered, but Phillips was politely told that for the moment the Company declined to let its houses, but when they should determine to do so, he would be informed.³

One major innovation in the Company's handling of its property which resulted from the Fire was the introduction of insurance. Not surprisingly this had become widespread in the city, and the Company was following a general trend. The Hall was the first property to be insured, from August 1700 for seven years at a cost of £30.6s.od. and for a cover of £2,000. The first mention of other property insured seems to occur in 1707, when the Court ordered the Company's houses in Hartshorn Alley be insured with the Hand in Hand Company for £1,000 and policies taken out on any other houses as yet uninsured; it was obviously therefore a process that had been going on quietly for some time. One of the first occasions that the benefit of the new policy was appreciated was in 1727 and not, as it happened, in London. Mrs. Catherine Rogers had recently renewed the lease on her house, the Salutation, at Gravesend, for which she paid a rent of £14 per annum and, on Company instructions, insured it for £200. It was soon afterwards destroyed by fire and she petitioned the Company to claim the insurance money from the Sun Fire Office and build her a new house. The details of the claim are a little obscure. The clerk claimed £412 on the Company's behalf, but the Sun were reluctant to pay the full claim and the final sum decided on was £290. The

Vintners then agreed to rebuild the Salutation as quickly as possible and accepted an estimate of £350, the work to be completed in three months. It was ordered in June 1730 that all tenants taking leases were to insure the premises with the Hand in Hand at their own expense but in the Company's name, and they were to deliver the policies to the Company for safe keeping. The following September it was thought preferable to countermand this and resolve that the Company should insure its own property. Despite a generally careful policy of insuring all its property, the Company was occasionally caught out. When the Sugar Loaf alehouse in Elbow Lane burnt down in 1789 it was discovered that its insurance had lapsed and the Company had to foot the bill for rebuilding. With this experience in mind, the committee of Assistants responsible for administering property recommended to the Court that in granting new leases, the tenants should be liable for insurance, and the clerk hastily made sure all lapsed policies were brought up to date. This paid off almost immediately, for in 1792 and 1793 two properties leased by Sir Charles Blunt, one a sugarhouse in Joiners' Hall Alley and the other premises in Brickhill Lane, each burned down, and the Company was able to collect substantial sums in insurance.⁴

In the second half of the eighteenth century the Company pursued a policy of adding to its existing property holdings, particularly in the neighbourhood of the Hall. This obviously reflected to some extent its improved financial status by the middle of the century, and once under way maintained its own impetus. In 1751 the first purchase was agreed with John Constable. This was for a toft of land behind the Hall garden at a price of £340. The clerk, William Bedell, was then asked to enquire whether the houses, or the ground rents thereof, on the west side of Queen Street, and close to the Hall, were for sale. It transpired that the ground rents were, and the purchasing process was under way. The land they had just bought was let to Mr. Donner for £20 per annum and it was agreed that he should erect warehouses on it with the proviso that these were not to be let to brewers, dyers, or anyone else whose trade would annoy the Company. A year later, more ground and houses at the bottom of the Hall garden, this time on the west side of Little Eastcheap, were bought from Mr. Walsham for £350.

In 1754 a much more important property was under consideration for purchase. This was Three Cranes Wharf, with land and houses adjoining the Hall, but the owner, Mr. Jennings asked £6,000 and the Vintners felt they could not go higher than £5,750. For the time being, therefore,

nothing came of the plan. Then, in February 1762, the Company received a letter from Mr. Jennings saying that he very much desired to sell the Wharf and the new buildings in Queen Street leading up to the Hall. This was not quite as much as they considered buying before and they decided to offer £5,000. Jennings asked £5,400 and then came down a hundred pounds. The Company upped its offer and the sale was agreed for £5,125. Unfortunately the business was then held up because Jennings was involved in a law suit that involved the property and naturally the Company did not wish to complete its purchase until it was sure he had clear title to sell. In 1767 the Company took possession of the property to which Jennings had undisputed right and retained £1,200 of the money until he got title to the warehouses under dispute. It was not until March 1771 that these too became Company property. The total acquisition virtually doubled the Vintners' possessions in the vicinity of the Hall, and was well worth the trouble they had been through to obtain it. The Company's tackle porters also benefited, since four of the houses in Queen Street and the ground floor of the most southerly one were handed over for their use at the ground rent of 16 shillings per annum. Another small property in the area, a house at the back of the Hall gardens and adjacent to some of the Three Cranes Wharf property, was sold to the Company by a Mr. Mercy and his sisters for £500. The purchasing policy was not limited to properties adjacent to the Hall, but nothing particularly substantial was bought elsewhere, and what was purchased was usually contiguous to property already in the Company's possession.⁵

As has been noted, the Court had reported with approval in 1731 that their estate had improved in the previous few years to as much as £1,133 per annum. In most cases the rents per house remained between £15 and £25 per annum in the 1760s, though often the tenant spent as much as £100 on repairs on each lease. In 1783, the clerk (still William Bedell, who occupied the position for more than fifty years), felt it incumbent on him to present a memorial to the Court. In it he pointed out that his considerable dealings with Company property had made him aware that in respect to current city values, much of it was under-let. Over the previous few years, with a number of leases falling in, he had therefore been instrumental in obtaining new leases worth £300 per annum more and causing more than £5,000 to be laid out by tenants in repairs. The property committee investigated and confirmed his figures and since in many cases, multiple properties were let on a single lease, the clerk had

lost a considerable amount in fees. The committee therefore recommended to the Court that he should receive a gratuity of £150, which was promptly agreed and paid. At this date the approximate annual rent roll had risen to about £1,700, and by the turn of the century had become about £2,000; income from Ireland was never included in the totals for Company rents, though the Kent properties were.⁶

Although most of the property owned by the Vintners was in the form of houses, many bequeathed to them by previous owners for pious uses, it did own a few sites that were commercially valuable even in the eighteenth century. One of these was Hammond's Key with its wharf and warehouses. When its lease fell in during 1792, it was proposed to offer it to the East India Company, together with other premises as far as Thames Street, on a sixty-one year lease at a rent of £400 per annum. The East India Company showed no particular interest in the offer and the Vintners were preparing to advertise it when they learned that the adjoining Botolph Wharf was soon to be leased by the city, and they decided the two might advantageously be let together. Following the city's example, they advertised Hammond's Key on a twenty-one year lease which, again following the city's lead, they increased to thirty-one years. It was offered in two lots, one, the wharf itself with its warehouses at a fine of £1,000 to be paid in two instalments; this was to go to the highest bidder for rent at auction, with a reserve of £200 per annum. Number 7 Lower Thames Street formed the second lot (and included the second porters' tackle house and the rooms over it). This was again to go to the highest bidder with a reserve of £25 per annum and an expenditure of £120 on repairs within twelve months. It went to Michael Rock of Parliament Street, Westminster, for £41 per annum for twenty-one years. Hammond's Key went to Robert Curling of Farringdon for £205 per annum for a twenty-one year lease. In 1796 the latter was given leave to assign his lease. Ironically it was the East India Company to whom he proposed to assign it. The suggestion that Curling may have been acting as an agent for the Company, since he got it for a much lower rent than the vintners had proposed to the Company, is made less credible by the fact that after only three years, the Company in its turn assigned the lease.⁷

Until 1799, when the cost of the war with France forced Prime Minister Pitt to the innovation of taxing income, the major form of tax had been on land, the basis of wealth in pre-industrial England. Land tax was paid annually by the owners of land, though most rents on leased land included

an element to cover the tax. A few years before the introduction of income tax, the government offered landowners a chance to redeem their tax by the purchase of enough government stock for its interest to cover the amount of tax due. Since the measure benefited both landowners and government it is hardly surprising that the offer was widely taken up. The Vintners naturally could not afford to redeem all their tax at once and concentrated on their more important properties first. For instance, the purchase of £3,781 worth of stock in 3 per cent consolidated bank annuities redeemed an annual tax of £103.2s.6d. on Three Cranes Wharf. The first property to be so redeemed was the Hall in 1798, together with the farm at Boxley. The annual rate on the Hall and its apartments had been £31.15s. per annum and on the farm (agricultural land being taxed at a much lower rate), £5.4s. The purchase of £1,145. 16s.8d. worth of 3 per cent consols. redeemed both lots of tax. Gradually over the years the Company redeemed the taxes on all their property.⁸

After all the major expense of the rebuilding, the Hall saw only minor alterations and improvements over the next 150 years. In 1704 the windows on the west side of the hall and in the parlour were 'sashed and sunk', that is, converted from casements to the fashionable new sash form, and lowered, probably to improve the symmetry; for some odd reason the east side of the hall did not have its windows sashed until 1723. In the same year, 1704, new iron gates were ordered for the front and rear of the Hall, which in turn were replaced in 1726. In 1742 a new set of tables and chairs and a new desk for the Master were purchased for the court room and in 1752 the outside of the Hall was repainted and the great staircase and ceiling were wallpapered for the first time. Previous ceilings and those walls not wainscotted had simply been whitewashed. The court room was causing problems in the 1760s, when members complained of the cold. Suggestions were made that a curtain hung across the room might answer the problem and that the installation of a new Bath stove or an improvement in the old one was urgently needed. If anything was done about the stove, it probably was not enough, for there was a fire in the court room chimney in 1770 which necessitated a new marble chimney piece. 1774 saw the porter's lodge and buildings in the courtyard, together with the wall next to the street, taken down and the wall rebuilt to the proper height with stone coping and iron 'Pallisadoes'.⁹

William Thornton described the Hall in 1784 as 'exceeding handsome'.

'The present edifice encloses a square court with a large handsome iron gate in the front next the street hung upon columns wreathed with grapes and leaves, and a Bacchus upon three tuns on each pillar.' In spite of this tribute, a report five years later noted the necessity of some major repairs including the rebuilding of the back of the under-beadle's house next to the garden, together with the parapet and facia of the back of the hall and of the pewter room, both adjoining the garden. The parapet and west gable of the hall and the back of the west wing also needed rebuilding and a new gutter laying. The Company's bricklayer, Mr. Bedder, estimated a cost of £450 and undertook the work. After this was done, the Company arranged for the alteration and improvements of the banqueting room and apartments in 1792, and put the work under the direction of Robert Smith, the Swan Warden. Unfortunately Mr. Smith let his enthusiasm run away with him, and when the work was completed, the Company was faced with a bill for £1,400 of which more than half was for 'upholsterers' and cabinet makers' goods'. The Court's horrified reaction was to attempt to return the goods to the craftsmen, but not unnaturally the latter refused to accept them, though they did suggest recourse to Mr. Christie's saleroom where the Company would probably more or less cover the cost. In the end they decided to keep a certain number of the articles, including mirrors, curtains, side-tables, etc. and sold £1,000 of the Company's stocks to cover the cost. As for the unhappy Swan Warden, he was informed that his action had so injured the finance of the Company that it was inconsistent with its safety and interest that he should ever hold office again. This harsh edict, incidentally, was rescinded in 1808.¹⁰

II

The Company has usually been well served by its elected officers; even Robert Smith's spending spree was prompted by a desire to embellish the Hall in a manner befitting a major company. At the beginning of the eighteenth century, however, members of the livery were still reluctant to take on the burden of office. At most elections, one or more of the newly chosen Wardens declined to serve for some reason or another, poverty, ill-health, or because it was someone else's turn before theirs. For instance, in 1704 Thomas Juxon, who had been elected a junior Warden, sent Maurice Kay on his behalf to offer £40 if he might be excused serving now or at any time in the future. The Court accepted the arrange-

ment. The elections of 1711 were particularly unfortunate. The Court had actually elected William Tew as Master when it was informed that he was dead. Lord Fermaugh, elected Upper Warden, declined to serve so did the Court's second choice, Sir Francis Dashwood, though the latter did serve when elected the following year. An unprecedented situation arose in 1786. Robert Mackreth was elected Upper Warden, but was almost immediately elevated to the position of Master on the death of the man originally elected. At the first two courts over which he was supposed to preside, he sent his excuses owing to pressure of business and a *locum tenens* was appointed for the chair. Then the Court received a letter from him indicating a longer absence, and in fact, Mackreth did not attend a single court during his year as Master. The Court circumvented this problem by asking previous Masters each to take the chair and become acting Master for a month. This arrangement in fact worked perfectly satisfactorily, though luckily the Company never had to have recourse to it again. As the century wore on, and the Vintners' affairs improved, the reluctance to serve was overcome and then usually only ill health prevented a man from holding office.¹¹

The century saw a marked revival in the Company's role in corporate affairs. Six vintners served as Lord Mayor during the period, no fewer than three of them in the first decade, and five others reached the shrievalty. The pageant that the Company provided for Sir Samuel Dashwood's Lord Mayor's Day in 1702 was generally held to be one of the finest of the later pageants. It was highly classical, the central figure being St. Martin, armed and mounted on a white horse. He was wearing a large scarlet cloak and was followed by several cripples and beggars asking for charity. In attendance were twenty satyrs dancing with tambors, ten halberdiers with rural music and ten Roman lictors. When the saint arrived at St. Paul's Churchyard, he there divided his cloak with his sword and distributed it among the beggars. Among the pageant's set pieces were an Indian Galleon with Bacchus and the Chariot of Ariadne, Bacchus' mistress, with speeches by both Bacchus and Ariadne, the Temple of St. Martin, with a speech by the cripple, the Vintage, with a speech by the Bar Keeper, and the Arbour of Delights, with a speech by Silenus. The great event of the day, however, was not the procession but the banquet given that evening at Guildhall, when the new Lord Mayor entertained Queen Anne and her consort, Prince George of Denmark. It was for this auspicious occasion that the Vintners' song, still sung by the Company, was composed (see Appendix I).

Not surprisingly these splendours cost the Vintners a great deal of money, approximately £450, and they later complained that they had received ill usage over it. Three years afterwards therefore when Sir Thomas Rawlinson was Lord Mayor elect, the Company declined to provide another such triumph. They apologised to Sir Thomas with all possible respect, but given the cost of a new barge and the improvements to the Hall, they felt they could not afford to repeat the lavishness of Sir Samuel's pageant so soon. They did, however, employ the Sergeant Trumpeter and the Queen's Drummers, the City Drummers and the Foot Marshall and his men, and provide a St. Martin on horseback to ride before the Company's ranks. The Company's Batchelors met in Fish Street, at the Feathers Tavern and marched down to St. James Garlick-hithe Church, where they met the Assistants and Livery. Much the same pattern was repeated in 1710 when Sir Gilbert Heathcote was Mayor, though the occasion was distinguished by the fact that this was the last time that the Lord Mayor rode to Westminster on horseback. Sir Gilbert was one of the most eminent vintners of the century; he represented the City four times in Parliament before sitting for county boroughs, was a director and one of the projectors of the Bank of England and was finally raised to a baronetcy by George II in 1733. The other vintner Mayors of the century were Sir John Thomson in 1736, Sir Daniel Lambert in 1741 and Sir Brackley Kennet in 1779, Sir Daniel having been translated from the Coopers' Company. All had their Triumphs, with musicians, a procession and as much other ceremony as the Company felt it could manage, but nothing again quite reached the splendour of Sir Samuel Dashwood's Triumph, which began the century.¹²

Each time a vintner became Mayor, the Hall was thoroughly refurbished, for it had become customary in such a case for the Mayor to have the use of a suite of rooms and do his official entertaining in the Hall. In the early years after the rebuilding of the Hall, the rent for these rooms had provided a useful addition to the Company's income. In 1705 Sir Thomas Rawlinson was offered the use of the rooms free and when he accepted, the current tenant, Sir Charles Duncombe, was asked to vacate them. At the end of the mayoral year Sir Charles was offered them again but declined to return. This could hardly have surprised the Court, for no tenant paying a rent in the region of £100 per annum wanted to be turned out periodically, even to make way for the Mayor. The Assistants therefore resolved to offer them to the Mayor elect for a rent of £150 per annum. For this, which he accepted, he had the use of the rooms and

the Company's goods in the hall, parlour and kitchen, with the Company's plate if he requested it. The Vintners reserved for themselves the use of the hall, parlour and kitchen for public dinners, and of the great parlour for their Courts. For some years this became the pattern. If a vintner became Mayor or Sheriff he was offered the use of the Hall gratis, otherwise it was offered to the Mayor elect, who as often as not accepted, and paid a rent of £150 per annum. By 1727 the Company's finances had improved enough for them to decide in future only to allow the Hall to be used by vintners holding public office and consequently declined to let it to Sir Edward Beecher, the Mayor elect, when he applied. Notwithstanding this resolution, two years later when Sir Richard Brocas asked to be allowed the use of the rooms during his forthcoming mayoralty, the Court decided to accede to his request in return for a hundred guineas in money or plate because of his many and extraordinary services to the city and his fellow citizens. But this was in no way to be taken as a precedent, and if the Hall was let in future it was not to be for less than 300 guineas. In 1750 the Court agreed to let the Hall to Alderman Francis Cockayne for his mayoralty and contrary to their earlier resolution they decided not to ask him for any specific rent but to let him give them what he thought fit. This generosity paid off, because the Alderman subsequently asked to be translated from the Farriers' Company before his year of office began. The Company agreed, and for a fine of £100 he was admitted to the Livery and Assistants and excused all offices, but it did ask him to pay for the use of the Hall and all charges to which they would be put on Lord Mayor's Day.¹³

The eighteenth century saw a complete reversal of the attitude among members of the Company over the taking up of the livery and holding of office. At the beginning of this period, both were a burden a member sought to avoid if he possibly could; by the end either was viewed as an honour eagerly accepted, despite the hardness of the times resulting from the long war with Revolutionary France. This change in attitude was a reflection of the changing position of the livery companies. By the early eighteenth century, the economic advantages of admission to the freedom of a company were made less evident than they had been. The companies were still passing through the transitional stage from being necessary economic fraternities to becoming honorific fellowships, but during this period they did not really offer the advantages of one or the other. In the early part of the century, as the Vintners have illustrated, their income from property was not yet sufficient for them to be able to relax their

dependence on that part of their income derived from their members in quarterage, fines and fees. These had all been increased in the first desperate days after the Fire, but it was not until 1740, for instance, that the livery fine was reduced from £31.13s.4d. to £25. Quarterage was frequently in arrears, and in 1712, difficulty of obtaining a quorum of Assistants at Court meetings led to the decision to set aside one pound to be divided at each court among those who attended. This gentle bribery seems to have been effective, since the sum was trebled in 1730 and in 1775 it was a flat rate of 5s. per attendance at court and 3s. at committees. By this date the number of Assistants, including the officers, who attended ranged between about fifteen and thirty.¹⁴

In view of all this, it is hardly surprising that the period was one of declining membership. Until the time of the Fire, it is reasonably safe to say that most owners of taverns found it an advantage to be members of the Vintners' Company rather than any other. After the Fire, a great many people were retailing or using a handicraft without taking up the freedom at all, let alone with the appropriate company. In 1712 the Corporation took a stand on unfree trade and passed an Act reaffirming gild byelaws and encouraging the companies to carry out searches. Sometimes these were only carried out with reluctance, since the fines the searches brought forth barely covered the expense and the time of the officials involved. Despite the encouragement of the Act, recruitment declined as the century wore on. For instance, in 1707, 112 apprentices were bound to members of the Vintners' Company and thirty-six men took up the freedom, mainly by servitude. Ten years later 102 apprentices were bound and thirty-six took up the freedom, by 1736 the numbers had fallen to sixty-eight apprentices and thirty freemen, by 1746 to thirty-four apprentices and twenty-six freemen and by the early 1750s to approximately twenty-five apprentices and twenty freemen. At this point, the Court decided to take action to arrest the decline in membership. This they did in two ways, by the encouragement of redemptioners and the enforcement of its byelaws.

Earlier in the century, freedom by redemption was not sought after. In May 1731 Isaac Murray paid £150 for the honour, but his admission was followed by a petition from divers of the livery and yeomanry that no-one be admitted by redemption, because of the great hardship caused to tavern-keepers by the admission of cellar-keepers and others in this way. The Court, taking into account the honour and interest of the Company, agreed, but by the 1750s it was forced to reverse this decision

and declare that anyone of good repute applying for the freedom by redemption should have it for £25 plus the usual fees. A considerable number of the earlier redemptions under this new ruling were the new breed of coffee house keepers and later, wine and brandy merchants were conspicuous entrants, but as the century wore on an increasing number came from the new professions and were architects, stockbrokers or attorneys. Indeed, in 1785 the Court was forced to order that because of disproportionate numbers of attorneys recently admitted to the Company and the livery, no more were to be accepted until further notice. The second decision taken in the early 1750s was to enforce the byelaws against anyone drawing wine in cellars, who was not either apprenticed to the trade or a journeyman of it. This was due to the increasing number of tavern-keepers who operated by licence rather than as Vintners and were therefore largely responsible for the falling numbers of apprentices. In spite of these measures, the number of apprentices bound remained on average twenty-five a year for the next two or three decades, and the numbers taking up the freedom by servitude or patrimony was only about ten a year. By the 1790s, however, numbers had picked up somewhat. In 1797, for instance, thirty-three apprentices were bound, eighteen took up the freedom by patrimony and servitude and eight others by redemption.¹⁵

Naturally with the decline in overall membership went a decline in the size of the livery. In 1700 this had been 248 and by 1725 had shrunk to 219, though of these only about 150 took an active part in Company affairs. A considerable number of liverymen who found themselves in straitened circumstances petitioned for a return of their livery fine, thus forfeiting their privileges. If they could prove their need, the Court returned the fine, or part of it. In 1713, however, it decided that so many fines were being returned that it was detrimental to the Company and in future nobody who had not borne office as a younger Warden, or fined for the same, should have more than £20 of their livery fine returned. In 1717 a list of thirty-three names of those who were expected to take up the livery the following year was laid before the Court. Anyone who refused to take the livery, and was not excused, was sent before the Lord Mayor. The Court was only willing to excuse a freeman from the livery if he could swear he was not worth £500. In 1747 a list of twenty-one names was considered for the livery in the following year; two of them came from outside London, but the vast majority were city tavern-keepers. In 1771, when the Court issued every liveryman with a silver medal with the

Company's arms on one side and the name of the liveryman and the date of his admission on the other, only 150 were minted, showing the size of the livery had shrunk still further. The medals were designed to be used as entrance tickets to the Hall on public feast days, and were issued free after the livery fine had been raised from £25 to £26.5s.; 7s.6d. was paid for the return of each medal on the death of the liveryman.¹⁸

As a general rule, it was about twenty years before any liveryman was likely to be called to the Assistants. Since the size of the Court was limited in 1731 to forty-one, including the current Master and Wardens, each liveryman only stood approximately a one in four chance of being called at all. The two younger Wardens were for the greater part of the century elected from among the most senior liverymen and were either called to the Assistants then or soon after. It was not until they had been an Assistant for about seven years that they were chosen as Upper Warden and automatically went on the next year to serve as Master. In 1788 the Court changed this system because it was felt that by it the two younger Wardens suffered great inconvenience because they had no chance to become familiar with Company affairs. Instead, those of the Assistants under the chair who had not served as Renter Warden would now do so in rotation and those who had not been Swan Warden would do the same. The resolution was passed in Court by the slenderest majority of nine to eight, but it was the beginning of the present system whereby one man passes automatically from the most junior office to that of Master, serving in each. It did, however, have the side effect of reducing somewhat the number of men with experience of office. At the beginning of the century the committee of general management was chosen each year after the Wardens were elected and consisted of the Master and Wardens and several prominent members including aldermen and ex-mayors. Its size was approximately fifteen, with a quorum of three of whom one had to be the Master or a Warden. In July 1732 the committee's number was limited to thirteen, but in 1777 this was made more flexible by an order that it was to consist of the four office holders and all those Assistants who had passed the chair.

In 1788 for the first time the Court set out in its minutes what it considered to be the official duties of the Master and each Warden and it seems of general interest to include them briefly here. The Master was to take the chair at all courts and committees and regulate the expenses of the dinners at the above gatherings according to the several sums allowed;

at that date, namely 12 guineas for each court, £31.10s. for each of the three committees of view and audit, £20 for Midsummer and Michaelmas days and £10.10s. for the two openings of the wine porters' box each year, at which the Renter Warden usually presided. The Upper Warden's only duties were to attend the Master at all courts, committees and meetings, to assist and advise when required and also to present all persons admitted to the freedom to the City Chamberlain at Guildhall. The Swan Warden was also to attend the Master on all occasions and if the Upper Warden was absent to make the presentations of freemen to the Chamberlain. His main task, however, was to attend to every matter relating to the royalty of swans, but only under the direction of the Court. Until 1737 the Swan Warden was expected to defray from his own pocket the costs of swan upping and the subsequent dinner. In that year, however, the injustice of this was rectified and the expense was in future defrayed by the Company, with the Warden being expected only to find the wine for the dinner. Of all the four offices, it was that of Renter Warden which was the most complex and the most burdensome. From election day to election day he was responsible, under the direction of the Court, for the Company's finances. He was given custody of the plate, paid the almswomen their allowance each week and the random poor their gifts, and provided the wine and liquors for all courts, committees and meetings from the Company cellars and the silver to pay the customary fee to those who attended. He received the rents of all the Company property, the dividends from its stock, the quarterage collected by the beadles and the money from the porters' box. Finally he had to draw up his accounts in the book given him by the clerk and pass them at the end of his year of office to a committee for auditing.¹⁷

III

The complement of officials employed by the Company remained much the same throughout the first three-quarters of the century. At the Hall itself this consisted of the clerk and two beadles, the clerk's clerk and the two servants of the two beadles. The Company also retained the services of a surveyor, a chaplain, a cook, an engineer and a bargemaster and his mate. One of the most remarkable features of the Vintners' history is the longevity and loyal service of its clerks. In nearly 450 years since Adam Wright became the first clerk, only twenty-three men have held the post,

two of them serving for more than fifty years. Six men held office in the eighteenth century; John Ange, who had been appointed in 1695 resigned at the end of 1722 because of ill health. This had been bothering him for some time, since in 1717 he had been granted six weeks' leave of absence to go to the 'Bath'. George Barnardiston was elected in his place and a thorough overhaul was made of the clerk's effects. Schedules were made of all the deeds, books and writings in Ange's possession and new presses were made for them and put in 'the little room up one pair of stairs', in effect, the Company's first muniment room. In addition, three rooms over the parlour were added to the clerk's apartment for the use of Mr. Barnardiston. At this date the clerk's official salary was £26.13s.4d. per annum, but each year he received an additional gratuity of about £10, together, of course, with fees and free lodgings. Yet apparently this was not enough for the new clerk, for George Barnardiston was the only official to swindle the Company. In March 1726 a Mr. Kendrick appeared at the Hall with a bill of sale for the clerk's goods to secure a debt of £515 and asked the Court to see that nothing was removed. For their clerk to be badly in debt was a shock for the Court, but more horror was in store for them when it was discovered that he had been forging bonds in the name of the Company for his own profit and misapplying divers sums of its money committed to his care. As a result of his 'Notorious and Vile Practices and Misbehaviour whereby he has justly incurred the Displeasure of this Company', Barnardiston was summarily dismissed and the Court had to insert an advertisement in the *London Gazette*, asking all those who held Company bonds to produce them for the purpose of authentication.

When the new clerk, John Preston, was appointed, the Court took every precaution to prevent such a thing happening again, and drew up a list of limitations and restrictions for every clerk. He was to attend at all courts, committees and meetings and whenever else he was ordered to do so by the Master and Wardens, he was to sign a receipt for all the Company's deeds and writings delivered into his care and to make no 'sinister bargains' for himself on any of the Company's leases. He was to be re-elected annually and be sworn in, signing these articles, and in addition he was to give a bond of £1,000 guaranteed by two persons with no connection with the Company for the faithful performance of his duty. Finally a table of fees payable to the Company's officials was ordered to be hung in the hall and parlour. These were paid at binding of apprentices and granting of freedoms and made to the clerk and beadles; for instance,

the highest, paid when receiving the freedom by patrimony, were 7s. to the clerk, 4s. to the upper beadle and 2s. to the under beadle, plus 6s.8d. to the Company. In addition to this, the clerk received quite substantial fees where his own legal work was involved; £2 for a lease and £1 for an assignment, with smaller sums for searches, certificates, petitions, and bonds.

With the position thus clarified, the Company held a formal ballot for the appointment of its clerk each year. This was in effect a formality, because there was no occasion when the clerk was not re-elected. It held true even for William Bedell appointed as clerk in 1736, who got into financial difficulties, though not apparently criminal ones. They sprang from Bedell's position, approved by the Company, as secretary to the Irish Society. In 1747 the Court had reason to examine his accounts but found them correct, and the idea that he should be discharged was rejected. He was, however, required to enter into a bond for £1,000 and two securities for him into bonds of £250 for the payment of the balance of his account. Mr. Bedell returned his humble thanks to the Court. Three years later the Renter Warden, Mr. Martindale, whose own accounts were being audited, alleged that dividends from the Irish Society and some arrears in rents had not been paid to him by the clerk. The Court satisfied itself that the allegations were true, but was divided on whether to allow Mr. Bedell to remain for the rest of the year and settle his accounts with the new Renter Warden or dismiss him forthwith. The former was agreed, but by so narrow a majority (eleven to nine) that each member's vote was entered in the minutes. The Court, by paying him half his year's salary and gratuity, and by allowing him some money for past business, enabled him to settle the £90 Irish dividend with the Company and left him longer to settle the money from tenants. At this point Bedell's account with the Company seems to have been £236.12s.5d. owing by his former note of hand, £90 in dividends, and £266.18s.10d. in sundry rents, of which he had paid off £294.11s.10d., and had £298.19s.5d. still outstanding. Mr. Scott, one of his securities, was called before the Court and told that he must pay off the remainder in three annual instalments. He and the second security, Mr. Marston, then proposed to enter into new bonds for £500 each and one for Mr. Bedell of £1,000. Once this was done, the Court re-elected Bedell as their clerk, and gave him permission to let the first floor of his apartments to Dr. Archer to increase his income. The money was presumably all repaid and the matter was never again referred to in the minutes. William

Bedell served as clerk for nearly forty years afterwards; in 1786 he petitioned the Court to the effect that he had held his office for nearly fifty-two years and asked that he might be indulged with a proper person to be associated with him as clerk, recommending William Cole. The Court agreed to this, Cole being an Assistant and having served as Renter Warden in 1782. In June 1788 Bedell finally resigned and the Court allowed him the use of his apartment and a pension of £200 per annum as a 'Token of their Regard to him for long and faithful services'. He died in April 1790 aged 83.¹⁸

When William Cole was appointed clerk in 1788, new regulations for the office of clerk were drawn up. He or his clerk were to be in attendance six days a week between the hours of 9 a.m. and 3 p.m. The clerk was to receive the usual fees for binding, freedoms, etc. together with £10 for keeping the Irish accounts. He was to have the apartment on the east side of the Hall with perquisites of candles, coal and wine and a salary of £150 per annum covering all the Company business except lawsuits and Acts of Parliament, when he might present charges for the extra work. In 1790 Cole received a rise of £50 per annum in his salary and two years later was given a piece of plate worth 25 guineas as an acknowledgement from the Company of his diligent and extraordinary services.¹⁹

In comparison with the Company's clerks, the beadles seem to have held office on the whole for shorter periods. Throughout most of the century there were two beadles, the man serving as under beadle being promoted in due course to be upper beadle. In 1711 the unlikely event of both beadles dying almost simultaneously occurred and two new men had to be chosen. There was usually competition for the post and in most cases from freemen of the Company. In the early part of the century their salaries were £14.4s. and £6 respectively, with gratuities of £10 and £8, raised in 1724 to £12 and £10. On top of this, like the clerk, the beadles had free lodgings at the Hall and fees payable for admission, freedoms, etc. When it was decided to re-elect the clerk to his position each year, the same provision was extended to the beadles. A further perquisite, and one by no means to be despised, was that in the event of their deaths, the beadles could be reasonably sure that their widows would receive a place in the Company's almshouses if they needed it. Although none of the eighteenth century beadles got into difficulties as severe as those that affected two of the Company's clerks, they were both reprimanded in 1727 for taking more than they should in fees, and in 1753 two others

admitted lending out the Company's pewter for public entertainments. They were warned that if it happened again they would be suspended, and a second time would mean their dismissal. These particular beadles, John Beete and William Towers, had served in their respective offices since 1742, and in 1755 the Court noted that because of their age and infirmities, neither was able to discharge his duties properly. In consequence, Mr. Pilliner, who for some time past had occasionally been employed as messenger, was needed in almost constant attendance at the Hall, and the Court decided to spend £12 on a suit of clothes for him, with a gown for court and committee days. The death of the upper beadle, John Beete, in 1756 and his replacement by William Towers did not really improve matters. Towers' age meant that Pilliner had to assist him in delivering summons, with an increase in his salary from £4 per annum to £6 per annum. The new under beadle, Edward Saunders, was confined for debts of £140 in 1758 and could not pay them, so the Company advanced £40 to pay a dividend to his creditors. In 1759 he was in custody again, but he got himself out again fairly quickly and satisfied the Court as to his position. Not only was he re-elected to his post, but in 1760 on the death of Towers he was promoted to upper beadle.

The tasks of the beadles are not defined in the Court minutes until 1780, but in 1769 they were both ordered to be in attendance each day at the Hall until 3 p.m. unless required by the clerk to go out on business and neither was permitted to absent himself overnight without permission from the Master and Wardens. This rather suggests that the beadles had not previously been as constant in their attendance as they might have been. When the Court decided to draw up several rules and orders for the beadles, it began with increasing their salaries and gratuities. These were henceforth to be a total of £26.5s. per annum for the upper beadle and £22 per annum for the under beadle. While both were to continue their respective walks for the delivery of summons and letters, the under beadle's main task was to be at hand to take messages and make himself useful to the Master and Wardens and to the clerk. It was he, therefore, who would be most frequently out of the Hall. The upper beadle was to have the apartment nearest to the hall and court room, and he was to provide breakfast on court and committee days according to the allowance provided, and he and his wife and servant were to wait on the Court. The Company's colours, linen, glass, pewter pots (though not, of course, the plate) were to be kept in his custody, together with the

watermen's frocks and badges. In 1788 the old system of salaries and gratuities were discontinued and they were paid straight salaries of £26.5s. and £22 per annum respectively, instead of having the same sum made up of salary plus gratuity, with perquisites of candles and coals, plus an allowance of £5 per annum made to the under beadle for cleaning the Hall. The beadles then asked if they might be paid twice yearly and this was agreed.²⁰

Right at the end of the eighteenth century the Company made its next major change in the organisation of its paid officials. The Court had been worried for some time about the age and infirmity of the beadles and in 1796, on the death of the under beadle, John Hall, it decided to act. The upper beadle, Edmund Atkinson was now incapable of performing his duties and was therefore pensioned off. He was given a pension of £60 per annum and because he had to leave his apartment and was incapable of doing anything for his own support, he received a further gratuity of £20 per annum. Since at the time the salary of the senior beadle was £26.5s. plus fees, perquisites and an apartment, this was indeed a generous pension. In place of Hall and Atkinson the Court decided in future to elect only one beadle at a salary of £40 per annum plus £10 in lieu of coals and candles and £10 in lieu of other perquisites, with an allowance of £5 per annum for keeping the Hall clean and one dozen bottles of wine after each livery dinner. The duties of the newly elected beadle, Richard Andrews, were essentially those of the old upper beadle. In place of the under beadle the Court accepted a recommendation of the committee's that two stavesmen be elected to attend the beadle. They were to take over the two walks and deliver summons, attend the clerk and carry letters and messages, deal with the washing and sweeping of the yard and garden and aid the beadle to shift furniture and lift carpets in the Hall. For this they were to receive a salary of £10 per annum each, and the first two stavesmen elected were William Harvey and Thomas Truss.²¹

The other persons in the employ of the Company can be dealt with more briefly. Details about the Company's chaplains can be found in the chapter on charity. Not much information exists in the minutes about the men retained as cook for the Company; they had been employed since the seventeenth century, but were not permanent members of the staff. They were employed on a retainer basis and then paid for the livery and court dinners they provided. If there was more than one candidate for the post, then they were chosen by election. In 1758 a complaint was made to

the cook, Anthony Tracey, about the last Swan Upping dinner and apparently to the surprise of the Court, instead of acknowledging the complaint and apologising, 'he said he had dressed dinners for the greatest men in the kingdom and never had so many words as now'. The outraged artist withdrew immediately and the Court proceeded to elect Thomas Hayne cook in his place. From the time of the Fire the Company employed a professional surveyor who attended the general views, drew up estimates of repairs, plans of the properties and schedules of fixtures, oversaw repairs and rebuildings and directed the Company's workmen. After a disagreement with Mr. Burnell, the surveyor, over his bills in 1773, however, the Court decided that the present conditions of the houses no longer required a permanent surveyor. If they needed one in future, the Master and Wardens could consult one as they thought proper. A few months later, when this situation did arise, the Court unanimously appointed one of their own liverymen, Ezekiel Delight. An engineer was retained for the sole purpose of playing the Company's fire engine four times a year and keeping it in good repair, a task sometimes combined with the post of bargemaster. By the end of the century his fee as engineer was £3 per annum.

The bargemaster and his mate were invariably working rivermen who took charge of the Company's barge for Swan Upping, Lord Mayor's Day and any other occasion when it was required. In 1717 the Court decreed that the Master have a new wine coloured coat with flat silver buttons and a silver badge with the Company's arms surmounted by St. Martin on horseback. Fifty years later he was ordered to wear his livery and badge every day and not just when on the Company's business. At this point the salary of the master and his mate were £5 and £3 respectively. The watermen hired to row the barge were paid on an *ad hoc* basis, but many probably rowed regularly. When Edmund James was elected mate, it was noted that he had been in the Company's service as a waterman for eighteen years. The Company was as generous to its aged watermen as to its other dependants. John Parry, bargemaster for many years, was given two guineas and five shillings per week when he was ill and incapable of earning his living in 1767; he in fact died soon afterwards. One of his successors, Thomas Holmes, who petitioned for relief in view of his old age and long service in 1793, was given £10, and an annuity of £10 per annum in addition to his salary. Most bargemasters were succeeded in their posts by their mates.²²

The Company's barge tended to involve them in a considerable degree

of expense. In 1721 the bargehouse was ruinous and the landlord unwilling to repair. They were offered land for a new one by Captain John Pottenger and estimated that its interior measurements needed to be eighty-six feet by twenty feet, but nothing seems to have come of it. March 1728 saw a new barge ordered because the old was not worth repairing. It was to have carved figures representing the four seasons, Fame and St. Martin on horseback, together with the Company's arms. Six banners were to bear the arms of the Company, the city and the king, representations of St. Martin and Bacchus and the flag of the Union (i.e. England, Wales and Scotland). A new barge finally necessitated a new bargehouse. Plans to rent land adjacent to the Haberdashers' bargehouse fell through and the Company rented land at Fulham on a ninety-nine year lease at a rent of £10 per annum and a fine of 60 guineas. The original plan was for the house to have an upper room for the entertainment of the ancients of the Company. This was later abandoned because of expense and even without it the new house cost £300. Major repairs were done to the barge in 1739 and at the same time the committee viewed a bargehouse at Chelsea belonging to the Apothecaries' Company and took a twenty-one year lease from them at 10 guineas per annum. The house at Fulham they decided to let. This did not prove entirely satisfactory and in 1752 the Fulham house was repaired for the Company's use and the Chelsea one sub-let. The cost of further repairs at Fulham in 1764 estimated at £155 reversed the decision yet again. Chelsea was repaired at a cost of £55 and taken on a new lease and the Fulham house disposed of. In 1794 the barge was virtually rebuilt and named the *Bacchus*. Its completion was followed by a dispute with Mr. Mott, the bargebuilder, who had heavily overcharged. The Company offered him £260 in full settlement and in the end he accepted. Large sums were again expended on the barge in 1791, gilding, painting and reupholstering alone costing £250 and after that nothing further was done to it for the remainder of the century.²³

The early years of the century saw the Company involved in a number of ceremonial occasions besides the customary livery entertainments. Three vintner Mayors in the first decade of the century naturally made a difference, but so too did the military victories of Marlborough. In 1704 the Master, Wardens and representatives of the livery attended Queen Anne on her triumphal procession to St. Paul's to give thanks for the victory over the French and Bavarians at Blenheim. When Ramillies was celebrated in June 1706 during Sir Thomas Rawlinson's mayoralty,

he received the queen at the Hall, attended by six of the finest musicians. The occasion saw a dispute over precedence between the Vintners and the Grocers' Company. In the procession to St. Paul's, the Grocers claimed precedence over the Vintners as being next in seniority to the Mercers, while the Vintners claimed it as being the company to which the Mayor belonged. This knotty problem was taken to the Court of Aldermen, which eventually decided that the companies should keep to their accustomed precedency and that the Mayor's company could, in future, only claim precedence on Lord Mayor's Day. The Master and Wardens provided for the day five hams of not less than fourteen pounds each, five and a half dozen fowls, twelve and a half pounds of butter, a firkin of small beer, and appropriate amounts of red, white and canary wine for the Hall and more wine and tobacco for the stands reserved for the Company in the streets. A final triumphal procession to St. Paul's celebrated the Treaty of Utrecht in 1713. Nothing similar occurred until 1768 when the livery in their gowns were ordered by the Lord Mayor to go by barge from Three Cranes Wharf to Westminster to attend the city barge until the Mayor, Aldermen and His Majesty the King of Denmark had landed. The Court decided to lay on an entertainment for the livery at the Hall on their return.²⁴

These civic ceremonies, however, were only occasional and the main entertainments were those on Lord Mayor's Day and Election Day, and for Swan Upping. One of the most constant themes running through the early part of the century was the desirability of keeping uninvited persons out of the Hall on public feast days. The remedy tried in 1708 was to have a seal engraved with St. Martin and used on all tickets to future entertainments; these were to be delivered up at the gates before entry was permitted. This system seems to have been on the whole successful, though in 1731 the Master and Wardens appointed two persons to stand with the wine porters at the gate of the Hall to receive the tickets from guests at all public dinners. They were not to admit anyone on the pretext of an invitation by a member without first calling on the said member to check. For the Lord Mayor's Day entertainment in 1733, the Court ordered that as soon as the Master and Wardens, Assistants and livery had entered the Hall from the barge, the gates were to be locked and no-one else admitted. Just before the dinner was served, the list of members was to be called over and anyone in the Hall who was not a member was to be turned out. 1786 saw more concern over uninvited persons at dinners and orders were given that the porters were to admit

only liverymen who produced both their livery medal and their invitation ticket. One hundred and fifty tickets were printed. Another problem, probably linked with uninvited attendance at public feasts, was the amount of wine stolen. Stringent measures were taken by the Court in 1732 to combat this. An account of the usual amount of wine (unfortunately not specified) delivered to the Master and Wardens on each public day was to be drawn up by the clerk beforehand, and if any more was brought up from the cellars the Master and Wardens were to be financially liable. The Master was ordered to appoint two persons to deliver all the wine to the waiters and no-one else was to be permitted to enter the room where the wine was kept. A hatch was to be made by the door for serving and the windows were to be locked. No further complaints were made, so it is to be supposed that the system worked.

The public entertainment for Swan Upping was, for most of the century, somewhat different. Apart from the Company's barge, which carried members of the Court up river for the official purpose of Swan Upping, a second carried ladies. Each had musicians and was amply supplied with wine and provisions, and a sirloin of beef for each set of watermen. In 1738 three dozen bottles of red port, one and a half of sherry and the same of Rhenish went on the barges and six dozen red port and one dozen bottles of white wine were provided for supper and an entertainment later in the Hall. 1751 saw each member of the Court given two tickets to admit ladies or gentlemen to the supper and ball. In that particular year the cost of the entertainment was £127.7s. By mid-century, it had become the custom for the Court and their ladies to dine somewhere up river, at Ranelagh, the Castle Inn at Richmond or at Brentford and instead of returning to the Hall by barge in the chill of the evening, they were conveyed home by coach. It was not until the 1790s that a ball and supper at the Hall again became customary. By this time the Court no longer officiated at the Swan Upping in person; for many years it had been the duty of the clerk and other 'proper persons' to travel up river and spend several days taking up the swans and marking them (see Appendix B). Apart from the major entertainments of the year, there were others which took place occasionally, and even the Swan Upping festivities were liable to be cancelled if funds were low. In the early part of the century dinners were held on the anniversaries of the Great Fire, Charles I's martyrdom and the reigning king's accession. These were all set aside in 1759 during a period of retrenchment and were not revived. The dinner in honour of the restoration of Charles II was not

discontinued until 1788 and then was re-introduced two years later. Every five years the Lenten dinner continued to be held under the will of Robert Gale, but was occasionally set aside in favour of the accumulated funds being distributed among poor members. It had originally been held more frequently, but since £16 per annum was the sum left, and eighteenth century inflation had eroded its value, the interval between the dinners had been increased to five years in 1740.²⁵

IV

Despite the general decline of company influence over the retail trades, the Vintners still managed to exercise a considerable amount of control over the retailing of wine. In the early years of the century the annual search of wines continued to be held and members punished for infringing Company byelaws. When a bill was put forward in Parliament in 1704 against the sophisticating of wines, the clerk drew up a clause for strengthening the search of wines and keeping it within the power of the Company. On seeking the advice of Sir Gilbert Heathcote, currently an M.P., the Company decided not to press for the inclusion of the clause in the bill because Sir Gilbert thought that the clause might in fact prove prejudicial to the Company and perhaps bring in searchers appointed by Parliament. If the members found the search burdensome they were compensated by the Company's protection of their interests on other occasions. An imposition that members refused to bear, and in which they were firmly backed, was the quartering of soldiers in their taverns, 'contrary to ancient custom and against the freedom and privilege of the City of London'. Complaints of this nature first occur in the minutes in the seventeenth century when the matter was usually referred to the Mayor and Aldermen. In the Act of 1714 against mutiny and desertion, a clause was inserted for the quartering of soldiers in inns and taverns throughout the kingdom, and although the Company solicited for an amendment to prevent quartering within the city it was rejected. They were, however, able to gain annual exemptions for free vintners at a cost to the Company of ten guineas per annum. When any member found he had soldiers billeted on him, the Company supported him if he decided to take legal action against the offending constable. The matter was regularised in 1760 when a new Mutiny Bill was brought into the Commons and the Court applied to the Secretary at War, Lord Barrington, for

permanent exemption of its members. When the Act was passed all vintners free by patrimony and service were exempt from quartering.²⁶

The other main issue concerning the members' livelihoods was that of wine licences. The Wine Licence Office was still farmed, in 1711 to a Mr. Roberts for £4,000, but after the fiasco of the previous century there was no question that it would ever be farmed *in toto* to the Company again. The Court at this date however believed that it might be granted the licences within the city. The Company was always ready to defend any of its members charged with not taking out a wine licence, but they suffered a tactical defeat in 1726 under the recent Act for retailing beer and ale, and the beadles were ordered to visit all members within the city and inform them that if they wished to sell beer and ale, as well as wine, they must take out a licence for the purpose from the Excise Office or face the consequences. In 1733, at the request of several members, the Court agreed to oppose any new excise or extension of the existing ones. They summoned a general meeting of the membership and called on the city M.P.s for aid. From one of them, Sir John Barnard, they were warned that a Commons Committee had been appointed to consider better methods of securing the duties on wines and tobaccos. The Court appointed a committee to go to the Commons and enquire what resolution the House might come to concerning the duties on wines and then lobby all the M.P.s they knew against it. This seems to have been successful. So, too, was the next move, initiated in 1745 by several liverymen, protesting about the number of persons retailing wine who were neither members nor held a licence. The Court agreed to see the Wine Licence Commissioners about getting a clause inserted in some act giving a clearer definition of what was meant by retailing wines. The Commissioners declined to apply to Parliament for such a definition, but recommended that the Company do it by presenting a memorial to the Lords of the Treasury. The Company decided that this would be imprudent, so the liverymen went ahead on their own and presented a memorial under their own names as freemen. This was favourably received, and although the current parliamentary session was too near its close to allow anything to be done immediately, the Treasury Lords promised to see that a proper bill to answer the purpose was brought in during the next session.

In 1757 the Wine Licence Commissioners launched a campaign to force every free vintner to take out a licence, thus wiping out the privilege that the Company's members had enjoyed for several hundred years

under their charters, and which would, if successful, in time have dismembered the Company. The Court, hearing rumours of this, took the advice of Sir John Barnard again and applied to the Chancellor of the Exchequer for information. They then resolved to inform him of their ancient rights and ask the Mayor, Aldermen, city M.P.s and the Recorder all to exert their influence on the Company's behalf, and ask the Mayor to call a court of Common Council to get formal city protection. The Company's action was successful and the Act passed in July 1757 included a proviso that all who were Company members by virtue of patrimony or servitude should be exempt from paying any tax for the liberty of retailing wine. The Company, however, did recognise that in the past the Wine Licence Office had been imposed on by retailers falsely claiming the vintners' privilege, and agreed to advertise in the press for all Company members who claimed the privilege to take out a certificate of their freedom in the Company. They were to pay the clerk 3s.4d. for it and pay any arrears of quarterage they owed before they got it – a neat way of dealing with the perennial problem of unpaid quarterage. The Wine Licence Office then provided the Company with the names and addresses of those who had taken out a £5 retailing licence, so that if the Company came across anyone retailing without a licence they could inform the Office. In return, the Company furnished the Office with a list of members claiming the privilege. Two years later, a further Act was passed which included a clause to prevent anyone by virtue of one wine licence, retailing it in more than one place, and to ensure that anyone retailing by licence had the word 'wine' on his sign or some other visible place near the door. Mr. Bronne, the Company's solicitor, and the clerk, William Bedell, had been requested by the Court to do their best to promote the bill, oppose any alterations and ensure that a proviso saving the Company's rights should be inserted if necessary.²⁷

Further action was contemplated by the Court in 1763 over wine retailing. The last wine search had been held in 1725, but even before that it had been difficult to get the proper number to make up the search, and since it had not been of much benefit, the Company had allowed it to lapse. The Committee now queried whether it was worth reviving. They wanted to enforce the Company byelaws against the drawing of wine by foreigners, but eventually decided that to do this would not have the effect of making masters take more apprentices, but rather lay them open to informations from free journeymen, however unworthy themselves, for employing foreigners. This was indeed an example of the Company

being overindulgent to masters at the expense of junior members. A better course to increase the Company's membership, it was believed, would be to apply for a byelaw obliging anyone taking up the freedom of the city and who followed the wine trade, to take up the freedom of the Company. This was an old ambition, and it was agreed to apply to the Common Council for such a bill, but for some unspecified reason at the time nothing more was done. In 1770 the Committee decided again to suspend the application, this time because of the current state of public affairs in the city, and in 1778 when they finally urged action, it was the Court who postponed the issue indefinitely.

1789 saw a new bill proposed in Parliament to subject retailers of wine to the same laws as those who sold spirituous liquors, and the clerk arranged to solicit the Commons for the Company's clause of exemption, which had been accepted by Parliament for earlier acts. The same procedure was followed three years later for a bill proposed to prohibit persons from selling wine retail from their own homes without first obtaining a beer and ale licence. On this occasion the Company made an investigation and was able to declare that none of its members in the city, Westminster or Middlesex kept a house as described in the bill, all were respectable tavern keepers or merchant retailers. However, a few months later, a paragraph in *The Times* suggested that free vintners were lending their names for the retail of wines in other peoples' houses and cellars in order to evade the recent Act. It was also contrary to the Company's own byelaws, for one of the ordinances approved by Queen Elizabeth, and carrying a £5 fine, was that vintners had to sell their wines in a house owned or rented by themselves and not by another. The Company therefore was obliged to insert an advertisement in the papers pointing this fact out, so that members who had done it inadvertently could no longer plead ignorance, and warning that it would prosecute members in the future for the offence.²⁸

It is therefore clear that although the Company by the end of the eighteenth century had long since ceased to be a trade gild in the true sense of the word, and had discontinued its wine search, it was still active in the affairs of the retail wine trade. The second half of the century was a time when Parliament was particularly active in controlling and regularising the Hogarthian scene of alcoholic anarchy, and the Company was forced to exert constant vigilance over the rights of its members. At the same time, it insisted that those members should observe the spirit as well as the letter of its byelaws and did not hesitate to prosecute

offenders. The long-drawn-out skirmishings with the Wine Licence Office, which had characterised earlier centuries, now gave way to a close working relationship with the Excise Office, whereby a list of privileged vintners was sent to the Office twice yearly and any vintner breaking the law of the land as well as the Company's byelaws was presented to the Office so that he might be prosecuted.

Chapter IX



The Vintners' Company Charities

I

Religious devotion was one of the primary motives for the establishment and maintenance of the early medieval craft guilds. As the Middle Ages wore on, charitable and social activities were developed and the purely religious aspect began relatively to decline. It was this pattern that to some extent cushioned the companies from the effects of the Reformation. Yet throughout the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, members still left wills charging the Vintners' Company with the maintenance of charities and obits for the dead and bequeathing to it property to endow the trust. It was only endowments for this purpose that were affected by the Reformation during the 1540s. The trusts were often a source of considerable profit to the Company, for, as the donor no doubt intended, the expenses of the services only absorbed part of the annual income from the property, leaving the Vintners free to dispose of the residue as they saw fit. One of the most valuable of the Company's properties came to them in this way. Hammond's Key was bequeathed by Thomas Crofton, a priest and freeman, in 1439. He was himself only a trustee of the property and transferred his responsibilities to the Company. In return for Hammond's Key, it was to celebrate a *dirige* (or office for the dead) in St. Botolph's Church, Billingsgate, each year on 3 May for the souls of John Wakele, vintner, Maude his wife and John their son and for Geoffrey Dallinge, to be followed the next day by a requiem mass at which the Master and Wardens were all to attend. The cost of these services, even including an attendance payment of 20s. per annum to the Master and Wardens, was hardly likely to equal the profits from the Key. Similarly, the Vintners' properties in Hartshorn Alley, Bow Lane and Cordwainer Street, among others, were acquired for the support of obits, masses and chantry priests during the fifteenth century.¹

At the Reformation, chiefly under an Act of Edward VI's first Parliament in 1547, chantries and obits were abolished and their endowments seized by the Crown. That this was not intended as an outright attack on the companies, as it was on the church, is clear from a clause in the Act providing for the future payment as a rent-charge, by all corporations, guilds, fraternities or companies, that part of their revenue that had hitherto been devoted to these superstitious purposes. The total amount the Crown could expect to receive each year from twenty-nine city companies was about a thousand pounds. Shortly after the passing of the Act the Government, being short of money, decided to compel the companies to redeem their rent-charges at twenty-years' purchase. This for the Vintners meant £361.10s. on an annual rent-charge of £28.2s.4d. The matter did not end here as the companies might have hoped. Years later in the middle of Elizabeth's reign, they were accused of having concealed a large part of their revenue which was devoted to superstitious uses at the time the Government fixed the rent-charge. The Vintners, together with the Salters and Drapers, were accused of having declared and bought up only about a third of the rents actually received by them for religious purposes. It is now almost impossible to get at the truth, but probably some of the property held for religious purposes was concealed, because the Company had interpreted the term 'superstitious uses' to cover the minimum proportion of each bequest, whilst their accusers interpreted it to cover the maximum proportion.²

At the time of their abolition, the Vintners held eight obits each year, for the souls of Thomas Lewes, Michael Richmond, Thomas Bayons, William Scarborough, Thomas Rogers, John Michol, Geoffrey Dallinge and Richard Rowe. They held them on the two feasts of St. Martin, in July and November, followed by a dinner. Not all were originally held in the church of St. Martin in the Vintry. Dallinge, as we have seen, arranged for his to be said at St. Botolph's, Richmond at Austin Friars, Rogers at Blackfriars and Scarborough at St. James Garlickhithe, but by the Reformation these had been grouped into two, and were held at Blackfriars in November and St. Martin's in July. This practice had become customary among the companies. The Vintners, with eight obits in five churches, were not, for instance, in the same difficulties as the Goldsmiths, who, by 1521, were engaged to attend twenty-five anniversary services at different churches in the course of a year, a time-consuming operation for the entire livery. With the exception of the maintenance of chantries and obits the religious observances of the companies remained

much as they had been before the Reformation; the Company's members still gathered for the funerals of brethren and attendance at church on the day that the Master and Wardens were elected was obligatory.³

For many years before the Reformation, charities had ceased to be solely religious. In an increasingly secular age, men framing their wills (and most charities were made by bequest rather than in the lifetime of the donor) turned their thoughts to social purposes, education or the support of the poor. This is reflected in several vintners' wills of the mid-fifteenth century preserved among their records. Although Richard Meryvale (1437), Thomas Crofton (1439), William Stafford (1466) and Thomas Bayons (1497) all bequeathed money for the saying of masses, they each also bequeathed money for the relief of either poor men of the craft or poor parishioners. The outstanding example, however, is Guy Shuldham. His will of 1446, which established the Company in its Hall, also provided on the site for thirteen almshouses for the poor of the craft. Many other companies had similar foundations. W. K. Jordan, in his detailed study, *The Charities of London, 1480-1660*, shows the incredible generosity of Londoners to charity in comparison with the rest of the country. With a population comprising five per cent of the country as a whole, the city gave thirty-four per cent of the total philanthropic funds for England and Wales, in all £1,889,211 raised from 7,391 donors, an average of £255 per donor. Almost half the total sum was given by the merchant aristocracy, the men who served as mayors, sheriffs, aldermen and masters of their companies. Jordan sees this generosity partly springing from the great economic wealth of London in general and partly from the fact that much of this wealth was in the hands of this tiny class of men whose status in the society of their time was 'ill-defined and certainly not commensurate with their wealth and power'. Their membership of the livery companies, with the consequent common modes of conduct and aspirations and ideals of communal self-help, bound them together and gave them obvious outlets for part at least of their charities. The Vintners' almshouses, founded by Shuldham, have continued to form the cornerstone of the Company's charities, both individual and corporate. Since the Company numbered fewer merchant princes among its numbers than many of the other twelve companies, no rival great foundations, such as schools, were set up, though individual vintners could and did found other almshouses or leave large sums for the foundations of schools outside London.⁴

II

Guy Shulldham's will left to the Vintners the property that became the Company's corporate Hall subject to certain conditions. The main ones were that the 'thirteen little mansions' on the site should be let to thirteen poor and needy men of the craft, whom the Master and Wardens were to choose, and if there were no needy vintners, then the needy of any kind. The Vintners were to accept no rent, and in addition, from the rents of some of Shulldham's other property, were to pay each inmate one penny per week. In return, the almsmen were to pray for the soul of John Micol, the Company's original benefactor, and they were not permitted to remove any goods from the mansions without the permission of the Master and Wardens and the vicar of St. James Garlickhithe. On entry they had to take an oath to observe this regulation and if they were 'debateful or unruly' they were to be removed after three warnings. No details, of course, exist about the physical form of the little mansions, and it is not possible to tell how the almsmen lived in the first years of their establishment. Once the earliest Company accounts begin, however, various details about the almsmen can be gleaned. They were paid, for instance, once a quarter, together with the beadle and the priest, receiving 13d. each. Out of this allowance, the almspeople had to pay the priest for his attendance on them; it was not until 1527 that the Company assumed this responsibility, paying the churchwardens of St. James Garlickhithe 8d. per quarter. On the death of each inmate, the Company paid for the empty house to be cleansed, the filth borne to the dunghill, and any necessary repairs, before appointing a newcomer to his place. The most striking feature revealed in the early accounts is that although Shulldham's will specified poor men of the craft, by the early sixteenth century, the Company was admitting women as well as men to the almshouses. Not many personal details, beyond mere names, are given in the accounts, but it seems reasonable to suppose that the earliest almswomen, like the later ones, were the widows of members. In one of the very few entries relating to individual inmates, the keeper of Bedlam (Bethlehem Hospital) was paid a fee of 6s.8d. to take in Joan Young and given 4d. per week for her keep, because she was 'bestrawght' and not fit for the almshouses any more. In another, details are given of the cost of burying Elizabeth Baxter in 1513, namely, for her winding sheet, 8d., the pit, 9d., for four men to bear her, 8d., for two torches, 6d., and two men to carry them, 4d., for wax, 1d. and an offering, 1d.⁵

Stephen Mason, who bequeathed property at Boxley in Kent to the Company, gave orders in his will of 1557 that the almspeople were to receive every year a hogshead of apples from his orchard. That this was done is testified by the Company's payments for their carriage. Mason was the first of a number of vintners whose wills included bequests to the almspeople. Stephen Skidmore, one of the Company's more generous benefactors (see page 216), left them each a gown and 20 shillings to be spent on drink on the day of his funeral, but at the discretion of the Wardens. Sir Cuthbert Buckle left them 6s. 8d. each in 1594. Rather more substantial were the next two bequests. In 1609 Richard Jacob left the Company his houses in Eastcheap to secure several annual payments to charity including 6s. 8d. to each of the almspeople. Edward Mallowes left the Company £150 in 1614 which it was to lend out at interest to young vintners; the interest paid was to go to the almspeople. Two other similar bequests in the early seventeenth century ordered that the interest should go to them also.⁶

The Company seems to have had its first serious dispute over the almshouses in May 1609. It had always been customary for the Company to have the disposal of any personal belongings left by deceased inmates. On the death of the Widow Hart in that month, however, her goods were claimed by her son-in-law, William Andrews. The Master and Wardens were quite amenable to Andrews having the actual goods, but they judged that he should pay for the value of them, the money to be given to the poor. They also made a judgement in principle that since the Company paid for the inmate's keep and not their families, each family should, on the entry of an inmate, agree to the Master and Wardens having the disposal of all goods in the inmate's possession at the time they died. William Andrews did not accept the judgement gracefully, but said 'in a scornful and disdainful manner that he would take course to get the money and he wished it were £100, he would get it well enough'. Although the Master and Wardens resolved that if any legal action was taken, the Company would bear the cost, Andrews' threat seems to have been an idle one and nothing further was heard from him. The successful applicant for Widow Hart's place, William Tomlinson, who was 'lame and decayed' agreed without hesitation that any furniture left by him should belong to the Company.⁷

Despite occasional additions to their incomes, the almspeople found it necessary to petition the Company in 1625 because of their 'great want in these hard times', and the Renter Warden was instructed to distribute

40 shillings amongst them. Twenty years later, at a time of great financial stress for the Company, the Court ordered that they should be paid 12d. each quarter day, their customary allowance, and also 8d. each binding day; apprentices were usually bound at a monthly court, though there was no court in January and sometimes none in August. In return for this increase, the almspeople were forbidden to follow the Master and Wardens to any meeting or to be seen where they dine, an instruction which indicates they had taken to scrounging, if not for their daily bread, at least for extras. In 1650 it was reported to the Court that there was great necessity among the almspeople, and account should be taken of their several wants. As a result the Master and Wardens were ordered to take what was necessary to relieve them from Company stocks, provided that it did not exceed £5 on any one occasion. This seems to have answered the problem for the time being, for when the almspeople next petitioned the Company, it was to ask that their allowance of coals be changed from charcoal to seacoal because the amount of charcoal they received was not enough to provide a small fire for half the year. The same value in seacoal, they felt, would serve them much better. The Court accepted this economic argument and agreed to supply seacoal instead. Although financial considerations were the main preoccupation of the almspeople in the seventeenth century, they did not escape the religious enthusiasm of the times. As early as 1610 they were ordered to gather in their hall (incidentally the first indication that the 'thirteen little mansions' had a communal hall) twice daily at 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. for prayers. A book of Common Prayer was to be purchased for them and one of the almsmen was to read from it. A suspicion that this order might not have been carried out too diligently is confirmed by a subsequent order in 1654, that prayers were to be read every morning in the almshouse chapel and anyone absenting himself was to be subject to a fine of one penny per day. If this was strictly enforced, the fine was far too heavy for anyone to contemplate absence. The order also indicates that what had formerly been the communal hall had been officially elevated to the status of a chapel.⁸

The rebuilding of the almshouses at Mile End after the fire has already been dealt with (see pages 168–9). In the ten-year interim between 1666 and 1676, when they were completed, there is no evidence as to what provisions were made for the inmates, but it seems reasonable to suppose that either alternative accommodation was found for them or that they found it for themselves and the Company made them an extra allowance

for rent. Whichever it was, they seem to have been satisfied with it, hence the reluctance on many of their parts to move into the new almshouses far away at Mile End. Less than year later, they had cause to complain that the drains were defective and leaked into the wall. When this was investigated the Court also ordered the chimney to be looked at and posts to be erected in the garden for drying clothes, presumably also on the request of the inmates. Once settled in their new abode, the almspeople had their allowance increased to one shilling per week and instead of collecting it from the Hall on quarter days, the Company's beadle now journeyed down to the almshouses once a week with their allowance. In 1679, the Company sealed a bond for £100 with Mrs. Hinton, widow of the former clerk, that it would fulfil the conditions of Philip Hinton's will. He had left the Company £50 provided that they distribute fifty shillings' worth of coal to the almspeople each year. At this date, the almshouses were still taking both men and women, and once they were elected they could expect tenure for life subject to certain conditions. The constitution did not allow for married couples and the inmates were therefore either single or widowed. If they married while resident, they were forced to leave. Nor were people generally accepted as inmates if their families could afford to provide for them. A mixed almshouse obviously brought its problems; in 1644 Nathaniel Harris and Sarah Barnbow were found to be 'of ill-behaviour', and since the latter spoke against the ancients of the Company and stirred up contention, the Court ordered them both to be put out of their houses and all Company charity withdrawn from them.⁹

By the beginning of the eighteenth century, the inmates of the almshouses seem to have become exclusively female. The Court minutes are missing for the period 1683-1703, and it is therefore not possible to tell whether this was the result of a deliberate policy or a natural evolution. Certainly the process of selection became rather more formalised. On the suggestion of the Master, all almshouse vacancies were, from 1713, announced at one Court and the candidate selected at the next. This meant approximately a month for word of the vacancy to circulate among members. At this date, the turnover among inmates seems to have been fairly rapid, two or three vacancies occurring in most years. Usually there were several candidates for each vacancy. The criterion used for selection by the Court was not so much need as status. On the rare occasion when one of the candidates was a widow of a court member, she was chosen without more ado. Otherwise widows of liverymen were

given precedence over those of freemen. Usually the widows of ex-Masters and Wardens in need were granted pensions and did not seek almshouse places. At each selection of a candidate, the unsuccessful applicants were given a small sum in charity, usually five shillings. Every widow entering the almshouses had to bring with her from her own parish a certificate indemnifying the Company from all charges other than the weekly payment to inmates. This was a result of the complicated poor law system of the time, whereby the parish of each person's residence was responsible for their support should they no longer be able to provide for themselves. If for any reason a widow left the almshouses, her old parish, rather than that of Stepney (where the almshouses were) or the Company, had to resume responsibility for her.

Various improvements in the financial position of the almswomen took place in the first half of the eighteenth century. The Company received a legacy of a hundred guineas from John Pierpoint, vintner, in 1713, with the condition that ten shillings a quarter was distributed among the almswomen. Despite this, the women petitioned in 1719 for some increase in their weekly allowance. The Court debated the matter and granted them an extra shilling per week each. A further legacy in 1746, from Thomas Flower, wine merchant, gave the Company £200 to provide £5 worth of coals each year for the almshouses and £5 for an annual dinner for the inmates. In 1751 the Court agreed to allow the almswomen two dozen candles each a year and a box to keep them in. Other gradual improvements were made to conditions at the almshouses. Following an order from the Commissioners of Sewers, the Court ordered the ditch at the almshouses to be thoroughly cleansed, and also had the old trees in front of them cut down and the wood divided among the inmates. As a result of a petition from the almswomen, the Court agreed in 1740 that Mrs. Strealey be permitted to sleep in the wash house and attend the widows when they were sick and granted her a wage of a shilling a week. Three years later when Mrs. Strealey herself was very ill, they doubled her allowance. A further petition in 1749 led to a piped water supply being laid on to the almshouses.¹⁰

The spiritual needs of the almswomen were never neglected, even in a secular age. The will of their founder had ordered that in return for the charity, they should pray for the Company's benefactors, and after the Reformation, the role of the Company's chaplain had gradually shrunk to taking the annual service for members on Election Day and conducting prayers in the almshouse chapel. In 1721 the chaplain, James Prince,

petitioned for an increase in his allowance and although the decision was deferred, he was given £10 as a gift. A further application in the following year led to his salary being raised to £10 per annum, but he was asked in future to read prayers to the almswomen three times a week instead of twice. He was succeeded as chaplain in 1728 by the Revd. Mr. Smith who held the post until his death thirty years later. Although no details are given in the minutes, the impression given is that both Mr. Prince and his successor were poor, local clergymen who boosted their meagre stipends by taking on extra duties. If such was indeed the case, the situation changed on the death of Mr. Smith in 1758, for his successor, was the Revd. William Cockayne, D.D., who was a relative of Alderman Cockayne, a former mayor and eminent member of the Company. Mr. Cockayne received a higher salary, twelve guineas, for saying prayers only twice a week, and this was soon raised to twenty guineas provided he preached four sermons a year for the Company on such occasions as the Master and Wardens appointed. Presumably he did actually preach the sermons, but he was far too grand to travel to Mile End twice a week to take prayers for a few old ladies. Instead, he subcontracted his duties to Mr. Bennett, and even then did not pay him regularly, because in 1767 Mr. Bennett had to apply to the Company to be paid out of Cockayne's salary. The latter retired in 1776 and was replaced by a local clergyman, the Revd. Jonathan Reeves of West Ham. On his death in 1787 his son was elected in his place and when he too died, six years later, Edmund Robson took up the duties of chaplain. It was customary for one of the widows to be responsible for washing the chaplain's surplice, which was provided by the Company, and for this service she was allowed 7s.6d. a year.¹¹

The Company's general attitude to its almswomen is summed up in an entry in the Court minutes for September 1753. Mrs. Gwynn, a liveryman's widow, applied for a vacancy, but since she was disordered in the mind the Court decided it was unfair to put her in the almshouses and gave her a pension of five shillings a week instead, because, as they put it, those already there 'should be made as happy in their retirement in the latter part of their life as their Circumstances will admit'. The Court, however, was not prepared to tolerate any behaviour it regarded as an abuse of the Company's charity. In 1728 Mrs. Smart was removed from her place for unspecified misbehaviour and in 1782, in response to a petition from several of the other inmates, Mrs. Winter was dismissed for 'very great misconduct', and removed to the Southwark Workhouse,



17. William Abraham, Master in 1442. From a drawing in the Roll of Arms of the Aldermen of London, 1446-7



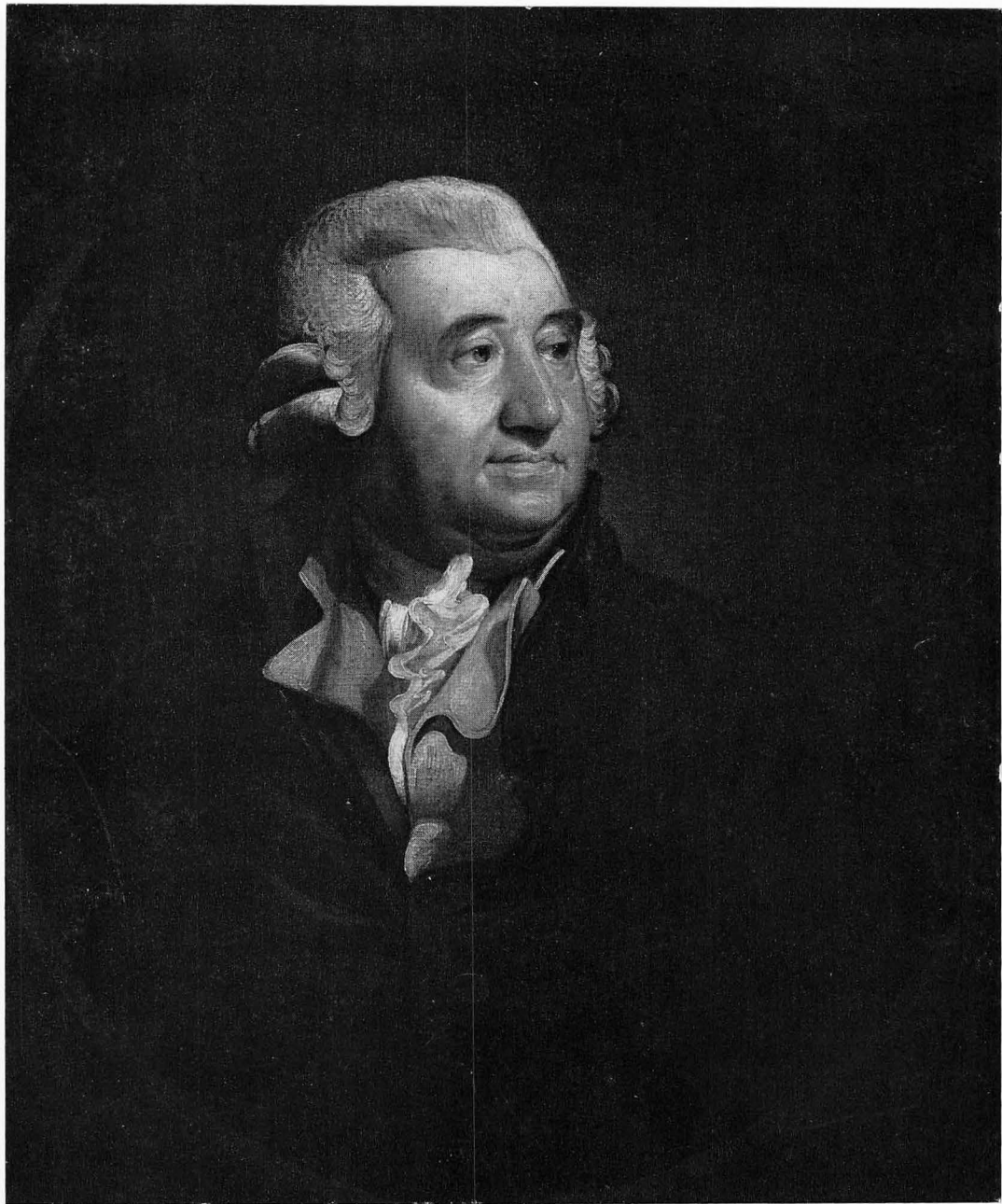
18. Christopher Barker, Garter King of Arms, Master from 1540 to 1543. From the heading of one of his Patents of Arms.



19. Sir Samuel Dashwood, Master in 1684, Lord Mayor in 1702. Painted by Hasman Verelst.



20. Sir Thomas Rawlinson, Master in 1687, Lord Mayor in 1705.



21. Benjamin Kenton, Master in 1776.



22. Sir Francis Wyatt Truscott, Master in 1880 and 1892, Lord Mayor in 1879.



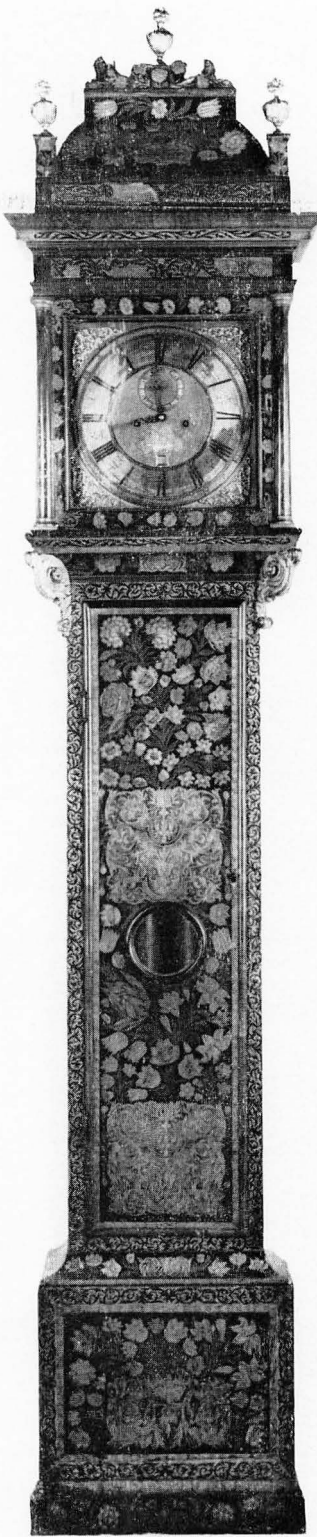
23. Sir Anthony Wagner, Garter King of Arms, Master in 1973.

The Company's seal matrix, c.1436. The obverse shows St. Martin dividing his cloak with the beggar; the reverse, a wine tun.





25. The hearse cloth given to the Company by John Husee in 1539.

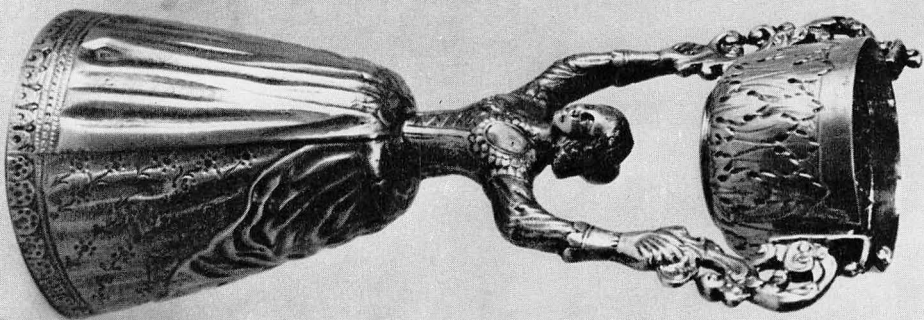
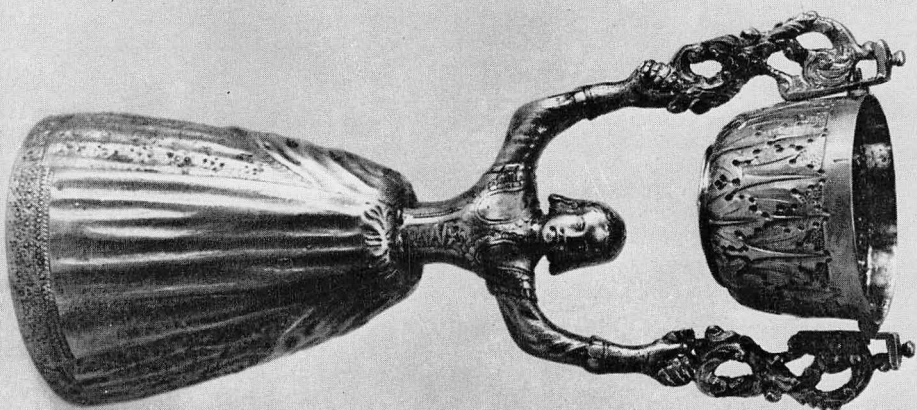


26. (a) Clock given by John Cannon, Master in 1704, now in the Court Room.
 26. (b) Wooden sword rest, 1705, carrying the arms of Sir Thomas Rawlinson, Lord Mayor, the City and the Company, still in use in the Banqueting Hall.



27. Salt and cover given to the Company by John Powell, Master in 1702. It is dated 1569.

28. Two 17th century
milkmaid or wagger cups
acquired by the Company
at a later date.





29. Coconut cup probably given to the Company by Ralph Davy who died in 1563. It is dated 1518.



30. Steeple cup given to the Company by Sir Thomas Rawlinson, Master in 1687. It is dated 1646.



31. Two cups and covers given to the Company by Sir Thomas Bloodworth, Master in 1659. They are dated 1653 and 1658.

32. Two flacons given to the Company by Sir Samuel Dashwood, Master in 1684. They are dated 1702.



'where she belongs'. Mrs. Thoroughgood was severely reprimanded for absenting herself from her almshouse for several months, which the Court thought a 'great fault', but having apologised and promised to remain there permanently in the future, she was excused and allowed to retain her place. In 1781 the Court made an attempt to limit admissions to the widows of liverymen only, and issued an order to this respect. They had no grounds whatsoever for this exclusiveness, since the will of the founder had specified that his almshouses should be available to any poor and needy member of the craft. In fact the Court was hoist by its own petard, for when the first vacancy occurred, despite its advertisement, no liveryman's widow applied and they had, perforce, to admit the only candidate, Jane Gillett, the widow of a freeman. They therefore reverted to their former custom of simply giving preference to livery widows. In 1794 it was resolved that in future each petitioner for an almshouse should have their petition signed by two liverymen or two respectable householders of their parish before they presented it to the Court.¹²

The limiting of the almshouse places to women had one important side effect. At various times it was proposed that a further set of almshouses be built to take men. The first suggestion came from Mr. Creiton in 1720 and that was to build seven houses in the garden of the existing almshouses for 'poor and decayed men of the Company'. The Court approved the suggestion and a subscription book was opened. No further move was made until 1743, when Mr. Worrall, the Company's surveyor, presented his plan for the men's almshouses to the Court. This was considered by the standing committee, but bearing in mind the expense involved, they recommended that the plan be deferred. It was deferred for so long that it became necessary to consider rebuilding the existing houses rather than adding new ones, and Mr. Worrall was asked in 1769 to draw up plans for twelve (not thirteen) new houses on the existing site, and calculate the likely expense. However, when the committee went down to Mile End to inspect the almshouses, they decided that if they were thoroughly repaired, they would stand for fifty years more. The cost of the repairs, which included both retiling the roof and rebuilding the fronts, came to £364.17s.7d., but the Company was aided by a gift of £100 given by Mrs. Ryecroft, widow of one of the Assistants, in memory of her husband. While the work was done, the almspeople were lodged elsewhere and their goods removed at Company expense. The almshouses for men were never built. Two of the almswomen were reprimanded in 1790 for making alterations to their apartments and the garden without

leave, but since one of them, Mrs. Haynes, was a hundred years old and unable to walk, they were both forgiven and the Court contented itself with putting up a notice in the almshouses forbidding all alterations without their formal approval.¹³

The end of the eighteenth century brought years of economic hardship, largely caused by the French war. The poor were particularly hit by the rising cost of food and the Company sought to protect their almswomen by a further rise in their allowance, making it one guinea a month, to be paid on the last day of the month instead of three shillings a week, a substantial increase. Ten years later, the almswomen petitioned for a further rise and such were the times that their allowance was, for the next six months, increased by fifty per cent. At the end of that period the increase was continued and then formally increased from 12 guineas a year to 18 guineas. Despite their care for the inmates themselves, the Court would not permit the almswomen to shelter other members of their family, and an enquiry in 1797 into the numbers of other persons and children resident with the almswomen, how long they had been there and what relationship they had to the inmates, resulted in the expulsion of them all and their total exclusion for the future. This did not totally solve the problem, however, since a number of the almswomen seem to have been making extra money by looking after small children, and in 1813 the Court again had to order the expulsion of all children from the almshouses. Yet the year before the Company had once more raised the inmates' allowance, this time by seven shillings a month, to £1.18s.6d., and in 1824 it was increased to two guineas a month.¹⁴

In 1769 the newly repaired almshouses were given a fifty-year life-span. Before the necessity of a complete rebuilding began to be an object of financial worry to the Company, their problem was solved. The father of the Company, Benjamin Kenton, died in May 1800. When his will was read, it was found that he had left £2,050 to the almshouses, £200 to the almswomen, both upon conditions, and £2,000 to the Company's general fund. The money was principally intended for the rebuilding. Kenton, who had begun his career as an apprentice in the Company in 1734, amassed a fortune through learning his master's secret of bottling beer for export to warm climates and carrying on the business after his death. He became a liveryman in 1749 and was elected to the Court in 1768, so he was an Assistant at the time of the almshouses' restoration, and served as Master in 1776. He died possessed of about £300,000 and apart from the legacy to the Company, bequeathed to various other

charities and schools about £60,500. He was buried in the chancel of Stepney Church, the parish church for the almshouses, and above his monument are his own arms and those of the city and the Vintners' Company. The provisions of his will included an annual sermon to be preached at the almshouse chapel, the clergyman to be chosen by the Master, but it was decided to have it preached instead in Stepney Church, so that more members of the Company might attend, and afterwards to hold a dinner at the Hall.

The Court asked Mr. Kenton's close friend, Jesse Gibson, a surveyor, who knew the testator's mind, to design the new almshouses. The plans were presented to the Court in December 1801. Each of the twelve houses was to consist of one room large enough to have a bed recess with folding doors. There was to be a communal kitchen and wash house and, of course, a chapel, the whole to be neat, plain and durable, with six houses on each of two sides of a square, with the chapel forming the third site opposite the entrance. The Court accepted the plan, with the addition of a south window to the wash house for sun and air, and a greater degree of uniformity in the size of windows and coverings to the doors. The Company tried, but failed, to buy several houses adjoining the site, so the new houses had to be built on the old site. There were ten tenders for the work, which was given to Thomas Pearson of Hackney Marsh for £2,120, using the old materials. The widows were given an extra £4 per quarter to find themselves a year's alternative accommodation and the work began in March 1802. By June 1803 the Court was giving orders for fitting up the interior of the chapel with seats, and the installation of stoves in the houses and grates and coppers in the kitchen. The whole of the front of the almshouses was 'rased and coved' with Portland stone and the Company's arms were cut at the top on one side with the inscription 'Vintners' Almshouses. Founded and supported by the Company of Vintners in the Ward of Vintry, 1357. Erected and established here after the Fire of London, 1666.' On the other side were Kenton's arms with the inscription, 'Rebuilt and further benefited under the will of Benjamin Kenton, Esquire, Citizen and Vintner, 1802.' Both the dates of the Vintners' inscription were, of course, wrong. The Company could not have founded anything in 1357, for it was not incorporated until 1437 and first inherited the 'thirteen little mansions' under the wills of John Micol and Guy Shulldham in 1446, and it was the fire which took place in 1666, not the rebuilding, which was ten years later. The almswomen moved into their new houses in September 1803, and during the

following winter suffered badly from dampness, the buildings not having thoroughly dried out. On their petition, the Company sent them extra coal. The rebuilding in fact cost £130.11s.6d. more than Mr. Kenton's legacy of £2,050 and in May 1804 the extra cost was given to the Company by Mr. David Pike Watts, Kenton's residuary legatee, who was also a member of the Court.¹⁵

Two other gifts benefited the almswomen in the nineteenth century. Alderman Lucas, when serving as Master for the second time in 1838-9, gave £500 to the Company. This was invested in a special fund producing £15.2s.2d. per annum which was divided among the almswomen. John Peacock's will in 1849 left a similar sum, but for some reason the interest produced on that and given to the almswomen, was only £14.7s.2d. per annum. In 1833 the Company was involved in a lawsuit over the original terms of Guy Shuldham's will. Information, amended in 1834 and 1835, at the relation of George and William Everitt was filed against the Company. Briefly the point of the suit was that under the terms of Shuldham's will, with the exception of the Hall, all the lands and tenements he left the Vintners ought to be put to charitable use over and above the thirteen almshouses and the original sum of 4s.4d. per annum paid to each of the almsfolk. The Company fought the suit. In 1836 the solicitors to the relators (informers) proposed a decree charging the Company with the legal responsibility of maintaining the almshouses in as ample and beneficial a manner as they were then maintained. The Company refused, not because it had any intention of not so maintaining the almshouses but because it had no wish to be coerced. A subpoena to rejoin was served in 1839, but no further proceedings were taken and the information was never dismissed.

During the nineteenth century, an annual visitation and inspection was made of the almshouses by the Court, but it was the chaplain who kept an eye on day to day affairs and if necessary, drew the attention of the Court to matters that he felt concerned them. In the exceptionally severe winter of 1854-5, for instance, he pointed out the extra expense the widows were incurring for fuel. Since the Court had already given the Quarterly Poor an extra guinea each for the purpose, this point was quickly taken and the almswomen were given the same bonus. On the other hand, the year before he had told the Court that he had been answerable for some assistance towards medical expenses during the winter, and although the Renter Warden was ordered to reimburse him, he earned a mild reprimand and was told that in future no addition was

to be made to the almswomen's allowance without a direct order from the Court. The chaplain, Mr. Bennett, died in June 1851 and out of six applicants the Revd. J. Coward was elected by the Court. The chaplain's salary had been fixed at fifty guineas per annum in 1818 and his official duties were defined as follows: he was to preach a sermon and administer the sacrament to the almswomen once a quarter, and read prayers to them twice a week. At each Court visit to the almshouses he also preached a sermon. He was expected to attend at the Hall in his canonicals on each public day and at Court dinners if the Master and Wardens so directed, when his place was to be immediately below that of the Father of the Company. Mr. Coward was still chaplain to the almshouses in 1880 at the same salary; as the Company's chaplain he received a further emolument of ten guineas a year.

Various minor improvements were made at the almshouses, of which the most significant occurred after the Court visitation of 1859. The surveyor was requested to inspect the almshouses' water supply and drainage system to see if, for a moderate outlay, water closets could be installed at each house. By the time of the Royal Commission Report in 1884 each almswoman received a total of £43.7s.10d. a year, and one of their number, who acted as matron to the others, received a small additional salary of eight guineas. With one or two increases in allowances, the general organisation of the almshouses remained much the same until the mid-twentieth century.¹⁶

III

Apart from the provisions made for its almspeople, the Company's main charitable concern in its early years was to aid those of its members who were poor and in need. The earliest accounts, for instance, have entries such as 'to Walter Thirlowe, vintner, when he was prisoner in Ludgate, xii d', or 'to John Brown, vintner, when he was sick, xii d'. The general mode of procedure was for the applicant to petition the Court for relief and according to his degree of need, he was given a small sum or sometimes a pension; in 1643 Thomas Neale, 'a poor deranged liveryman', was given an annuity of £4 to be paid quarterly. The source for this occasional charity, as opposed to the regular income paid to the almspeople, came in the main from the Company's rents. Only one of the early benefactors, Richard Meryvale, who died in 1437, left property

specifically for relieving the poor of the craft. A few years later the founding of the almshouses provided a more popular outlet for benefactions. Meryvale's property, in Lombard Street, formed the foundation of the charity given to 'decayed' members and their widows. Only a small number of the most deserving cases received annuities from the Company, paid quarterly (in 1620 for instance, ten people were receiving pensions which averaged about £2 per annum) but liverymen and their widows could always be certain of receiving something. It became customary for liverymen petitioning for relief to have part of their livery fine returned to them. In 1713 so many were petitioning that the Court was forced to limit how much they might receive, no more than £20 of the £31.13s.4d. fine, unless they had borne the office of younger Warden or fined for the same. Once a liveryman had been given back the maximum proportion of his fine, he forfeited the privileges of the livery. Apart from charity paid to petitioners, it was customary in December to give 10s.6d. to every poor freeman or widow of a freeman who attended the Court and asked for it. A considerable amount of the money paid out in random charity came from the poor box. Into this was placed fines paid by offending members or tackle porters, donations paid by each of the Company's lessees when they took up their lease, gifts made by charitably minded members and the like. The Box was opened twice a year, on Election Day and on the last Court day of the year, and the contents went partly to the almspeople and partly to the random poor. Although the Court minutes contain many petitions for relief and details of sums paid at random to poor members of the Company, to list many of them would be tedious.¹⁷

Despite the long and continuous history of relief in this manner, the Company had no specific fund set aside for its decayed members until 1808. In that year, Benjamin Kenton's will bequeathed £2,000 to the Company's general fund and it was decided to form a Decayed Members Fund with this money, and the annual interest of £100 was to be used to provide annuities of £10 to ten poor members. In the same year the Company's other annuitants, or Quarterly Poor as they were known, had their annuities doubled from half a guinea to one guinea per quarter. Since their number was limited to twenty-one, the Company had a supplementary list of Applicant Poor, who were also given a small sum quarterly. Both the Quarterly Poor and the Applicant Poor tended to consist mainly of women, generally widows of freemen. As a rule, once on the list a widow remained in receipt of charity as long as she needed it;

there were, however, one or two cases of removal from the list. Mary Hewitt, one of the Quarterly Poor came in June 1818 to collect her allowance, not having appeared at the right time with other applicants, but as she appeared 'much intoxicated and disgracefully dirty', she was ordered to be struck off the list.

A third class of widows receiving charity was that of annuitants paid four guineas a year. At the beginning of the nineteenth century there were six of these, and their number was doubled to twelve in 1824. With the increase in the Company's income which took place during the nineteenth century, a parallel increase in the number of those in regular receipt of charity occurred. By 1873, for instance, there were about thirty Quarterly Poor getting £2.12s.6d. per quarter, sixteen women 6 guinea annuitants, and eight 6 guinea decayed freemen, who were in fact each receiving £4.14s.6d. per quarter, and all these classes received a Christmas bonus of two guineas. The Decayed Members Fund was divided up into three classes. Four members received pensions of £50 per annum, four received £36 per annum and eight £30 per annum.¹⁸

Once Benjamin Kenton's bequest had been used to open the Decayed Members Fund, other bequests to it followed quickly. Eight were made between 1817 and 1849 ranging from 50 guineas to £250 and from 1818 the Court ordered all quaterage paid by members to be applied to the fund. By the date of the Charity Commission report included in the Royal Commission on the Livery Companies in 1884, the Fund consisted of £8,237.14s.9d. in Reduced 3 per cent Annuities and the Company also had £3,208 invested in stock which had accumulated over the years from surplus money in the poor box. These together produced an annual income of £343.7s.4d. The other major source of income for charitable purposes, the rent from Richard Meryvale's house in Lombard Street, was £900 per annum in 1880. The total annually of these two sums was reported by the Charity Commissioners to be paid out by the Company as follows: eight senior decayed members received an annuity of £36 per annum, eight junior members £30 per annum, and eight third class members 14 guineas per annum, sixteen widows received 14 guineas also (this was presumably the original class of four guineas annuitants), twenty-six Quarterly Poor received ten guineas per annum and the almswomen five shillings a month in addition to their other income. This totalled rather more than the income available from the two sources and the Company added £300 per annum as well. A few years later, in 1890, the system was simplified to some extent and the charity was reduced to a

list of quarterly pensions. An example for 1899 gives the following: four liverymen received £17.10s. each quarter, one received £15 (and there were three vacancies in this class), one freeman received £12.10s. (here, too, there were three vacancies), nine freemen and livery widows received £10 and seventeen £8 per quarter, and the last class, thirty-two freemen's widows and livery and freemen's daughters received £4.10s. (Twenty other smaller pensions, ranging from £12.10s. per quarter to £6, were paid from Meryvale's Gift.) Already it can be seen that the need for charity, especially among the higher ranks of the Company, was diminishing; this is clear from the vacancies, and was a pattern that grew more widespread as the twentieth century progressed.

One bequest which involved the Company in some legal worries in the nineteenth century was that of Dorothy Gale. In the early seventeenth century she had left £100 to be lent out at four per cent interest to two young men of the Company, the annual interest to be used to provide two extra loads of charcoal for the almswomen. Joined with this were three other similar bequests of the same period, and in each case the interest was to go to the almswomen. Unfortunately the bequests themselves, totalling £340, had been absorbed into the Company's general funds in the desperate financial difficulties of the 1650s. Thomas Bottomley and Hugh Coppental laid information in 1834 against the Company that it was not fulfilling its trust, in a suit similar to that brought by the Everitts in the 1830s. The Company admitted liability, but no further proceedings were taken. In 1880 it was able to report to the Commissioners that £4 per annum was apportioned out among the almswomen in lieu of these gifts.¹⁹

Certain bequests over the years had been made to the Company in which it held property subject to charity given to beneficiaries other than its own members. For instance, Richard Jacob left all his houses in Eastcheap to the Vintners in 1609, and from their rents the Company was to pay a total of £20.6s.8d. per annum among the parishes of St. Clement Danes and St. Andrew Hubbard (£4 and £2 respectively), Bridewell, Christ's Hospital, St. Bartholomew's Hospital and St. Thomas' Hospital (£3, £2, £2 and £3) and to the Company's almspeople, £4.6s.8d. All these bequests were still being paid in 1880, and the Company still held the property, except for some taken for city improvements. Stephen Skidmore, who died in 1584, left property in Shoemakers' Row, Broadway, Blackfriars to the Company in trust to pay every year to each of seventeen parishes in or near the city, twenty shillings to provide fuel

for the poor, to pay the parish of St. Stephen, Coleman Street, £1.12s. for bread for the poor, and the poor of the Company twenty shillings, in money, wood or coal. The major part of the bequest was to his native town of Cork in Ireland. The Company was to pay £24 per annum to the Mayor of Cork, and he was to use it to pay ten of the poorest inhabitants forty shillings each. Skidmore expressed the hope in his will that the Mayor and Aldermen of Cork would build an almshouse. Both Jacob's and Skidmore's charities were badly affected by the Fire. With the trust properties destroyed and no rents forthcoming, the Company could not afford to pay the charities, and it was not until 1712 that the full sums were again paid each year.²⁰

IV

One of the main criticisms levelled against the livery companies in the nineteenth century was that the value of their trust property had multiplied, while the sums they were bound to pay from their rents had remained the same. Another criticism was that too high a proportion of their charitable expenditure went to their own members. On the face of it, both these criticisms were valid in the Vintners' case. The annual sums of £20.6s.8d. and £44 paid out annually under Jacob's and Skidmore's wills remained as the donors had specified, while the rapid increase of property values in London in the nineteenth century had meant that rents from the East Cheap and Blackfriars properties had rocketed. In contrast, Meryvale's property in Lombard Street had also greatly increased in value, but as it did so, the Company increased the charitable sums paid to poor members under his will, so that the entire rent was used for the purpose. It did not do the same for charities which benefited poor elsewhere. This view of the circumstances, however, does not take into account all the random charity paid out each year by the Company for good work of various kinds. This was naturally less in the early years, when its income was much smaller, and donations tended to be for the benefit of churches, if not strictly religious purposes, but by the early seventeenth century other public works were benefiting; £10 was given in 1618 to Sir John Bennett for public buildings at the University of Oxford and £4 in 1630 towards the repair of St. George's Hospital, Southwark, though the Company found no less than £100 'despite their present indebted state for such religious, pious and necessary work' as the repair

of St. Paul's Cathedral in 1631. In the second half of the seventeenth century, cash was in far too short supply to support the Company's regular charities properly, let alone give to other sources, but by the beginning of the following century, it was able to be generous again.²¹

Virtually all the random charitable donations were made as a result of applications to the Court and not initiated by them. They varied considerably in type and geographical position, but most had absolutely no connection with the Company and many none with the city; it was simply that the livery companies were bodies known to be generous to charities. A few examples to show the variety of donations may suffice. They range from £10 given toward the building of a parsonage for St. James Garlickhithe in 1714 to £105 in 1745 to the Chamber of London for the Veteran scheme, from £20 in 1743 in answer to an appeal from the Bishop of Armagh for relief for sufferers from the fire there, to a seven-year subscription of £25 per annum in 1744 unanimously voted by the Court to the Revd. Thomas Carte, M.A., 'to enable him to continue with vigour his history of England'. Appeals to aid sufferers in fires rarely went unanswered, nor did public subscriptions for war veterans and the widows and children of the fallen. Hospitals were another favoured form of charity. Sometimes charity brought benefits in its turn. £50 given in 1824 to the London Orphan Asylum gave the Company the right of five votes, to be exercised by the Master, at each election to the charity, and by 1929 when a record of votes was compiled, the Company had voting rights in no fewer than twenty-five charitable institutions.²²

The main beneficiary from the Company's random charity, however, was education. Unlike other, richer companies, the Vintners had no educational trust of its own. Between them the livery companies supported to a large extent some thirty or forty schools including the great ones of Merchant Taylors, Haberdashers' Aske, St. Paul's (Mercers), Tonbridge (Skinners) and Aldenham (Brewers), but no Vintners' benefactor directly involved the Company in the founding or maintaining of a school. A number of vintners, however, left cash bequests to Christ's Hospital, and Sir Cuthbert Buckle, Lord Mayor, left property to provide the salary of a schoolmaster for Brough under Stainmore in Westmorland where he was born, but without involving the Company. The first interest the Company appears to have shown in education occurs in the accounts for 1566. An entry states that £12.17s.od. was received from divers members of the Company 'for the exhibition of our scholar, Edward Hounde' at

Trinity Hall, Cambridge. Hounde was given £6 per annum for his exhibition until 1577 when he was replaced by 'Mr. Dodd's son', who in turn was joined by Thomas Austen in 1580. By 1582 several more students had made their appearance. Dodd and Austen were still receiving their exhibitions, but the Company had increased the number of £6 exhibition scholarships and Robert Chambers and Martin Okyns received them also. Okyns may have been related to the beadle, Edward Okyns, perhaps a son, for he alone seems to have received his travelling expenses to Oxford, and in 1593 was given a benevolence of £13.6s.8d. towards the charges of his commencement. The four scholars of 1582 had been reduced to three in 1586 when Dodd finished his studies, and by 1588 only Chambers and Okyns were in receipt of exhibitions and by 1590 only Okyns remained, and he continued in receipt of his exhibition at least as late as 1603. In the last decade of the sixteenth and first decades of the seventeenth centuries exhibitions seem to have been paid on average to two other scholars as well as Okyns, though in 1610 the exhibition had been reduced from £6 per annum to £4 per annum.²³

Few details are given about the earlier scholars, rarely even the names of their colleges but when the Court minutes commence in 1608 more information is available; in 1614, Edward Malloves, 'a poor Christ's Hospital boy now at Peterhouse' (Cambridge) was given one of the exhibitions, and in 1626, another scholar, Toby Gittens, was at Trinity College, Oxford. Gittens was almost certainly a member of the prominent vintner family of that name, and undoubtedly preference was given to the sons of vintners. In 1634 Job Tookey, the son of a poor minister 'with a great charge of children', petitioned for the exhibition currently held by Moses Lee, who was about to take his degree, and was promised it unless a suitable son of a vintner petitioned; Lee was himself the son of a vintner. At this period, an exhibition seems to have been given to only one scholar at a time and after 1639 when Samuel Swan of Trinity College, Cambridge, received £5 for taking his degree, the Company's increasing poverty seems to have curtailed the exhibitions altogether. They were never recommenced. Hazlitt, in his history of the Livery Companies, describes Robert Gale, who died in 1612, as the Company's most munificent donor, who out of his lands and after the death of his wife, Dorothy, left £140 per annum to include £20 per annum to six of the poorer of the poor scholars of Corpus Christi, Oxford, and £20 per annum to the Company for a dinner every two years in Lent. In fact, Hazlitt is not strictly accurate. Benjamin Kenton far outstrips Gale in the scale of his

charities, and the annual figure he gives, according to Gale's will, should be £124. The Company had no connection at all with the payments to Corpus Christi scholars, for the land on which all the charities were charged was bequeathed to a relative. The Company did, however, keep Gale's Lenten feast, though as the years progressed the interval between the feasts had to be increased to counter inflation.²⁴ Although several other companies endowed exhibitions at Oxford and Cambridge, the Vintners did not follow suit and when they began to give educational charity again it was in a very different field.

In 1711 the Ministers of St. Martin in the Vintry and St. James Garlickhithe applied to the Company for aid to maintain a charity school for fifty poor boys in Vintry Ward. The Vintners voted a subscription of £4 per annum towards it. They doubled their annual contribution in 1744 after a petition from the Treasurer and Trustees for assistance to improve its declining state. By 1817 the Company was giving ten guineas each year and the school could count on an extra donation for any specific cause, including one for clothing twenty poor girls, as the school had ceased to function solely for boys. The school was rebuilt in Brick Hill Lane in 1840 and the Company's nineteenth-century rentals show that the school was paying £25 per annum rent to the Company. The other charity school with which the Vintners concerned themselves was the one at Stepney. This had been a beneficiary under Kenton's will, and ever since the building of the almshouses at Mile End, the Company had shown an interest in the parish affairs of Stepney. Although the Vintry Ward school has long since been closed, annual contributions are still made to the Stepney Greencoat Church of England Primary School and to Sir John Cass's Foundation and Redcoat Secondary School. The Coade stone statue of the Vintry Ward schoolboy which used to stand outside the school was put up on the west wall of the Hall in Anchor Alley (now Vintners' Place) in 1949.²⁵

V

The twentieth century has seen other major developments in the Company's charities one of which was the donation of £70,000 to the Wine and Spirit Education Trust to provide the initial capital to enable the Trust to become established. The Company's interest in trade education is dealt with more fully in the Epilogue. In 1932 all the old charities were

consolidated into one central fund, the Vintners' Gifts Charities. The income from this goes towards the running and maintenance of the almshouses as well as helping members of the Company or their widows and children, and other deserving cases. Grants also are made towards the education expenses of children of liverymen. As has been seen, since the end of the nineteenth century there has not been the same need to give charity to members of the company but, nevertheless, there are still some cases to whom help can be given. In addition, the Company devotes a substantial sum of money each year for donation to deserving charities.

The almshouses at Mile End were destroyed in 1940 by enemy action, and the Drapers' Company found accommodation for four of the almspeople at their almshouses at Bruce Grove. The Court of Chancery ruled in 1948 that the Vintners should rebuild their almshouses. It was obviously to the Company's financial advantage to erect them outside London, and during the 1950s various sites in Sussex were considered. Finally, in 1958, one at Nutley, near Uckfield, was decided upon and six bungalows of two rooms each were built, and the first occupant took up residence in January 1960.

Chapter X



The Company in the Nineteenth Century

Any division between the history of the Company in the eighteenth century and in the nineteenth century is purely arbitrary. There was nothing to parallel the significant changes which marked the end of the upsets of the seventeenth century and the restoration of wealth and self-confidence during the eighteenth century. Although the companies had long ceased to be craft or trade guilds in any real sense, the whole system remained unimpaired, at least on paper, well into the nineteenth century. Retail shopkeeping and most handicrafts were still confined to freemen and licences were required before unfree assistants could be employed. One or two test cases in the eighteenth century against non-freemen who refused to join the appropriate company, which the companies won, led to the enrolment of considerable numbers of foreigners. The city courts were always sympathetic to actions based on company ordinances, but this was not so if the case was appealed to a higher common law court. In practice, by the early nineteenth century, membership of any company sufficed for a man to obtain a licence to retail wine, particularly as most also took out beer, ale and spirit licences as well. Yet the retail trades of London were not finally thrown open until 1856, twenty years after the Municipal Corporations Act of 1835 abolished gild restrictions in the rest of the country. However, in March 1835, London at least saw the expensive fees for the freedom reduced to £5 and the freedom become independent of company membership, nothing more than a civic licence. Even after this date, some of the companies retained practical functions connected with their trade, the Vintners, of course, having their privilege of retailing wine without a licence. By the mid-nineteenth century, however, the companies had become concerned primarily with the administration of their estates and their social and charitable activities.¹

This final metamorphosis from trade guilds to the livery companies as we know them today, was not unnaturally reflected in the membership. The number of apprentices bound to vintners declined throughout the eighteenth century until the last decade, when they rose slightly, a phenomenon which continued in the first decade or two of the nineteenth century, before the numbers began to decline again. In 1807, for instance, the number bound was as high as forty-two, with nineteen taking up the freedom by servitude and four by patrimony that year. Numbers were still similar in the 1820s, but by 1836 had shrunk to eighteen apprentices being bound, with eight taking up the freedom by servitude and three by patrimony. Twenty years later the average number bound was only about four or five a year, with about the same number taking up the freedom by servitude and twice as many by patrimony. A pattern of numbers similar to this continued for the rest of the century. The increase in the number of apprentices in the early 1800s encouraged the Court to think of increasing the fees paid by the Company's members. The fine for Court members was raised to £50 and the livery fine for freemen by patrimony and servitude returned to its old post-Fire level of £31.10s., while the fine for admission by redemption became £42 and for the livery £50. The lessening of dependence upon redemptioners to maintain the Company's numbers is reflected in the increase of the admission fee by redemption to £63 in 1813. In April 1863 it was resolved that at the first Court of every year, a return would be made of the numbers of livery and freemen in the Company, as near as could be ascertained. The first return, for 1864, gives a total of 229 livery whose addresses were known and sixteen with whom the Company had lost touch, while eighteen of the livery were also members of the Court. The numbers of freemen were slightly higher, 243 whose addresses were known and sixty-eight whose addresses were unknown, giving a total membership of 574. The decline in the entry by servitude undoubtedly led to a decrease in the total membership over the century, but to some extent this was counterbalanced by an increase in the numbers entering by patrimony as the Company became more and more a purely honorary institution. By the end of the century the members of the Company were fairly equally divided between those who had entered by patrimony and those who had served an apprenticeship.

The question of the Vintners' privilege to sell wine without a licence was one that occupied a good deal of time for the Company's nineteenth century clerks. Many letters were received from vintners in different

parts of the country enquiring as to their eligibility. The privilege was only open to freemen by apprenticeship and patrimony and not by redemption, and outside London and a three mile radius, it extended to vintners living in every port where the Royal Navy rode, was fitted or repaired, or where there was a customs house and in every town where a postmaster was established. The right had been granted by James I's charter of 1612 and confirmed by an Exchequer verdict during the reign of his grandson, Charles II, and the Company had always regarded the right as extending to towns where posts had been established since the charter was granted. There is no record of the numbers of freemen retailing under the privilege in the nineteenth century, for the details returned annually by the Company to Excise Office were of those freemen entitled to do so, and not of those who actually did so. However, in 1849 the Vintners informed the Inland Revenue that in the previous seven years, only ninety-three apprenticeships were recorded and of those not more than half would take up their freedoms and of those, only about a tenth would exercise the privilege. Although such a relatively low percentage of the total membership were retailing wine by virtue of the privilege, there was quite a high level of abuse, witting or unwitting. One such form of abuse was by fictitious apprenticeships, where the so called apprentice had no intention of being trained in the trade. It was in answer to a query on this subject from the Inland Revenue that the Company returned its figures of apprenticeships with the opinion that the numbers were too few for a wholesale system of fictitious apprenticeships to exist, though they did not deny that it might occur in isolated instances.

Another form of abuse was using the privilege to cover houses of ill-fame. In 1807, the Company received information that Edward Matthews was using his name to cover a house of ill-fame called the New Tavern in Great New Street and on investigation it was discovered that he was doing the same for the Oxford Coffee House in Chancery Lane. At this date, before the establishment of the police force, the justices of the peace, as guardians of the law, had no justification for entering vintners' premises such as they had for those to which they issued licences. In this instance, Matthews was also breaking the Company's byelaw against operating more than one tavern. The Excise Office was immediately informed, but the fact that he was reported two years later for the same offence indicates that action neither by the authorities nor the Company had been effective the first time. In 1843 an anonymous information to the Company from a 'Licensed Victualler' complained of no fewer than

eleven named establishments frequented by prostitutes and young men 'who either rob their master or their parents', where the names over the doors were those of vintners who had nothing to do with the running of the places. Whenever the police fined the vintner as the nominal owner of the establishment, he paid up and recovered the costs from those in reality responsible. Although the instances of vintners themselves running houses of ill-fame were probably very few indeed, the abuse of lending their names to people who for one reason or another wished to retail without a licence was unfortunately quite common. There are numerous references in the records to cases that came to the attention of the Company, of which one may perhaps serve as an example, since it was in essence fairly typical.²

The case, which began in 1850, was a very long one and is fully documented in the Court minutes. For most of the time the matter was dealt with by a special committee of Assistants. It commenced with the arrival of a letter from the Commissioners of Inland Revenue saying that they had been informed by a person called Smith that a free vintner, George Mattison, was allowing his name to be used to sell wine without a licence and asking the Company to take the appropriate steps. Charles Smith, it appeared, was the proprietor of the Prince of Wales Coffee House in Air Street, near Regent Street, and had been convicted in the summary court at the Board's office for selling wine, beer and spirits without a licence. He pleaded guilty to the sale of wine, which he had been doing openly in Mattison's name although the latter had no interest in the business except the weekly rent he was paid for the use of his name. Smith was fined £50 by the Board for his offence. He gave the Board a copy of the memorandum of agreement made between himself and Mattison in 1849 whereby he paid Mattison one sovereign for his name to appear above the door as vendor and five shillings per week as long as his name continued to be used, and Mattison agreed not to allow wine to be sold in his name in any other house. Smith claimed that he thought free vintners were legally entitled to do this. Since his house was too big for his business, he looked for a tenant for part of it and a free vintner named Castellano had applied. The lease was held up because the house was registered in Mattison's name with the Excise Office and Castellano could not get his name put on the books until Mattison's was withdrawn. Apparently Mattison had refused to do so until Smith paid him a further sovereign. Smith was left with a genuine grievance; he had acted, as he thought, within the law, had paid Mattison all that was due

to him under the agreement and on top of that been fined £50 for what he saw as Mattison's misdemeanour. Then Mattison claimed that because his name was above the door of the coffee house, he was liable for debts incurred from tradespeople for fitting up the house. Smith said this was absurd, he could prove he was not in debt to anyone and Mattison was too poor for tradespeople to have accepted him as a security.

It was Mattison's poverty which was clearly at the root of the affair. The sum of five shillings a week (which seems to have been the going rate) for the use of his name was hardly princely, yet it obviously mattered to him; and it also explains his attempt to wring one more sovereign from Smith. When the Company summoned Mattison to answer the proceedings against him he could not attend because he was in custody under sentence from the Board of Inland Revenue for another offence. When he did appear, in April 1851, two months after the original summons, he pleaded guilty and prayed for leniency. The Company's byelaw of 1829 provided that if anyone was convicted of permitting a non-freeman to sell wine in their name, he might be disenfranchised, and in this case, the Court had little hesitation in carrying out its ultimate sanction because he had already been convicted in 1847 for lending his name at a summary court of jurisdiction. Although he had been deprived of his membership, Mattison continued to trouble the Company. A year later, the Court was informed that his name was being used to colour the sale of wine at the Terrace Pier, Gravesend, and the fact was reported to the Board of Inland Revenue. In 1856 the clerk reported that he had given witness, with the documents of Mattison's disenfranchisement, at a hearing of information laid against him by the Crown for selling wine without a licence in Liverpool. This is the last occasion his name occurs in the minutes, but as an interesting footnote to Mattison's case, Castellano, the other free vintner originally involved, was himself disenfranchised for lending his name for the sale of wine at Knight's Refreshment Rooms, Poole Valley, Brighton. It is significant that three of these attempts to abuse the privilege took place outside London, but equally so that the Company eventually caught up with the offender.³

The fact that Mattison had already been convicted of an offence before Smith's case began indicates that in the first half of the century, the Company's policy of warning offenders at their first misdemeanour was still in force. The Court had the power to disenfranchise but preferred merely to admonish. As the century wore on, however, and more abuses came to light and some members, like Mattison, proved to be persistent

offenders, the Court began to take a stronger line. Disenfranchisement for a first offence became much more common, particularly if the Court considered that the member had not erred out of ignorance. This alteration in attitude was in part due to an increasing sensitivity on the part of all the livery companies to general public opinion concerning their position and privileges. Two Acts of Parliament in the 1830s made the Vintners' Company think hard about its own privileges. The Justices of the Peace Bill proposed that the Vintners should no longer have the privilege of selling wine without licence except in the city itself. The Company naturally pressed for the retention of the full privilege, but they were forced to concede that the magistrates should have some right of enquiry into the Vintners' houses as they had in public houses. By agreeing to authorise disenfranchisement for abuse of the privilege, the Company enabled the magistrates in future to shut the house of a disenfranchised member for the sale of wine. Likewise, in the Metropolitan Police Bill of 1839, it was proposed that although vintners would not have to take out a licence, they should be subject to the penalties imposed on licensed victuallers for any offence they committed.

In March 1858 the Company received a letter from Mr. Buzzard, clerk to the licensing justices of the district of St. James, Westminster. He called the Court's attention to several cases of unlicensed houses where vintners were suspected of lending their names and asked for information on means to suppress such practices. The clerk, George Lomas, was ordered to co-operate with the justices in any proceedings concerning the abuse of the Vintners' privilege. This, incidentally, was one of the early occasions where the right to retail wine without a licence was referred to in the minutes in such a way. In the changing climate of the nineteenth century, the Company was aware that its right had become an anomaly and must in future be regarded as a privilege rather than a right. Further indications of this altered attitude came in the next few years. Later in 1858 a special committee of the House of Commons reporting on the billeting of soldiers under the Mutiny Acts decided that it was no longer expedient to continue the exemption of free vintners contained in the present Acts. To this the Company acquiesced without protest, and relinquished what they had fought so hard for in the preceding two centuries. Likewise, in 1864, a bill before Parliament for regulating the closing hours of licensed houses contained a clause specifically subjecting free vintners to it. The Court was of the opinion that it was not desirable to oppose it, again a reaction very dissimilar to one an eighteenth century

Court would have experienced. Earlier that year as a result of a decision in a police court and of counsel's opinion prepared for the Court of Exchequer, a clause was introduced into the Budget Bill to declare that the Vintners' privilege should extend only to one separate and distinct house. On this occasion the Court resolved that it should inform the Commons that although the governing body of the Vintners' Company would have cordially concurred in the application to Parliament to define the privilege, 'yet they must express surprise and regret that a clause so affecting the rights of vintners had been introduced into an Act of Parliament without notice being given to the Company'.⁴

The last major problem concerning the Vintners' privilege, namely, where it might be exercised, was resolved in the 1880s. It is hardly surprising that the Company had always interpreted the rights granted by James I's charter in the widest possible manner, and had over the years regarded it as extending to every town where a postmaster had been established. With the establishment of a comprehensive postal service in the nineteenth century, this interpretation took on an added significance, which the Inland Revenue found disturbing. In 1887 the solicitor to the Inland Revenue, W. H. Melvill, wrote to the Company asking for the names of the port towns and the thoroughfare towns with postmasters between London and Dover and London and Berwick in which the Company was entitled to sell wines under their charter from James I. This was indeed the crux of the matter, for despite the Company's own liberal interpretation of its rights, these were in fact distinctly limited by the charter itself. During 1889 the matter was carefully considered by Mr. Melvill, Frank Richardson, the Vintners' solicitor, and the Commissioners of the Inland Revenue. The decision arrived at was a just one, but not particularly favourable to the Company, since it was based on a strict interpretation of the 1612 charter. In future the privilege of retailing wine without a licence was to be operated by vintners only in the city of London and within a three mile radius of it, in thirty named ports and in forty-two named post-towns between London and Dover and London and Berwick, but also including four or five towns on a route across from York to Penrith and Carlisle. The Court accepted the decision and on the advice of their solicitor, communicated it forthwith to all members of the Company, so that none would continue to sell wine anywhere else without a licence because the Inland Revenue intended to proceed against everyone infringing the law. The decision had the effect of removing the privilege from members who had exercised it for years, and several

fought the decision. Thomas Pruday of Birmingham took his case to law, for instance, but the magistrates returned a verdict against him and he was obliged to take out a licence, and so had several other disgruntled members. The Company was undoubtedly to blame for this because of its over-liberal interpretation in the past, but by accepting the stricter view without demur in 1889, it ensured that most of its members who wished to exercise the privilege (about one-fifth of the total membership of 450) remained entitled to do so and that the Vintners' privilege survives to the present day.⁵

II

One of the most significant features of the Company's history in the nineteenth century concerns the change in city property values. Although the alteration was under way in the later years of the previous century, its acceleration became more rapid as the nineteenth century progressed. It had ceased to be fashionable for wealthy vintners to live in the city, but most taverners still lived on the premises and the Company's property was largely let for residential purposes in 1800. There were obviously wharves and warehouses on their rent roll, but these were the exception rather than the rule. By the end of the century almost all the residential property had been converted into shops and offices or specifically rebuilt for those purposes. In earlier centuries the wealth of the livery companies was often determined by the large estates in the country that they owned, now it was directly proportionate to the amount of property owned within a two mile radius of the Mansion House, a factor which greatly enhanced the wealth of the Vintners. In the middle of the century, tenants of the smaller houses might still be on leases with a rent of as little as £25 per annum, but the average rents were nearer £100 per annum. As one example of many, the rent of No. 34 Queen Street, which was £28 per annum in 1757 had increased by only £4 fifty years later, by 1871 it was let to William and Vincent Young, Patent Lamp Manufacturers for £80 per annum and in 1892 it was let on a long-term (eighty-five year) building lease to William Hoare at the beneficial rent of £120 per annum. Hoare in fact also leased adjoining land from the Company at the same time and the new building was intended to occupy both sites. The lease was in fact assigned almost immediately to the Mutual Life Assurance Society for £7,800. Likewise the Sugar Loaf

tavern in Elbow Lane had a rental of £24 per annum for the last quarter of the eighteenth century. By 1823 this had become £70 per annum and by 1880, £120 per annum. If this increase in rents, commonplace to the twentieth century mind but at the time radically different to anything that had occurred before, affected the Company's smaller properties, its effect on the larger commercial properties was even more dramatic. Hambro Wharf let for the considerable sum of £1,000 per annum as early as 1840 was let for £2,150 only twenty-five years later.⁶

It is interesting to note that the rise in the value of city property was directly paralleled by a decline in the value of agricultural land. By the early years of the century there were two tenants at Boxley in Kent. Vintners' Farm, as the larger holding was known, was farmed by Mr. Luck in 1812, when he informed the Company of an adjoining cottage and ground for sale. After an inspection, the Company agreed to buy and added them to Mr. Luck's farm for an extra six guineas a year rent. The following year, the Court minutes noted that he was badly in arrears and it was only when legal measures were in hand that he paid £510 on account. In February 1815 Lord Romney proposed to exchange some six acres in Boxley with the Company for their mutual convenience. Since the Company's land in question was unproductive and needed draining, Mr. Luck had no hesitation in approving the exchange, and the Company was so pleased with the arrangement it added an extra acre to the plot it handed over to the earl. At the same time, Mr. Luck petitioned for a lowering of his rent, which was £315 per annum, because of the failure of his wheat crop. His rent and rates were like those of the rest of the country, at a wartime high level, and his farm was in a very high state of cultivation, but the crop failure had left him without reserves. There is no evidence that the Company did agree to lower his rent when he first petitioned in February 1815, but he applied again six months later and it was arranged that if his arrears were paid promptly, the rent would be reduced by £50 per annum. A year later they were still unpaid and the only means Luck had of paying was with the proceeds of his hop crop, which he agreed to hand over to the Renter Warden the moment the hops were sent for sale. A month afterwards the Company distrained for the rent and it was eventually settled that Luck should surrender the unexpired portion of his lease and a new one would be granted for the remainder of the term at the reduced rent of £200 per annum, but it would be held by Mr. Luck's brother, Nathaniel, and James and William Golding, who agreed to pay the arrears. However, falling prices and the

consequent reduction in the value of agricultural land which followed the end of the war with France, meant that Luck and Messrs. Golding were just not able to pay off the arrears. In 1823 they begged to be relieved from paying them and asked for a future rent of £100 per annum. The Court, after some debate, agreed to a twenty-five per cent reduction on the last and present year's rent. In fact, the value of agricultural land remained low for most of the century and the Boxley rents never regained their wartime peak. Indeed, in the 1860s, the income from Vintners' Farm was only £135 per annum, in direct contrast to the rapidly rising value of city property. The other small pieces of land at Boxley brought in a further £46 per annum.⁷

The biggest changes to the Company's property took place along the Thames waterfront. As early as 1803 the Vintners received notification from the Commissioners of Customs on instructions from the Treasury, that they intended to make a compulsory purchase of the Company property at Hammond's Key. The Company immediately took legal advice and had it surveyed and valued, and having rejected the Government's first offer, proposed a purchase price of £6,000. This was accepted. Most of the purchase money was used to buy a house in Fleet Street adjoining their property in Salisbury Court. In 1810 a proposal was made to build a bridge across the Thames from Queen Street to Southwark. For centuries the only bridge over the river had been London Bridge itself. and then the mid-eighteenth century saw the first of the Westminster bridges, but the city did not gain a second until this one was proposed. Almost at the same time plans were made for another at the end of Fleet Street, which, when built, became Waterloo Bridge. The other city bridges, Blackfriars and Tower, were not built until much later in the century. The proposed bridge from Queen Street, the Company realised, would enhance the value of their adjoining property, even if it meant that some would have to be demolished. A special committee of the Court was set up to deal with the whole question. It was originally proposed that the London end of the bridge be sited at Three Cranes Wharf and the bridge was for some time known to the Vintners by this name. Messrs. Sills and Co., the Company's tenants for the Wharf, sold their lease for £10,500 and moved to the adjoining Hambro Wharf in 1811. It was not, however, until 1815 that the actual building got under way. In February of that year, the Vintners received formal notice from the Southwark Bridge Company that it was about to take down the necessary houses and requesting an exact statement of the nature and

quantity of the Company's estate and the price they required for sale.

The premises required from the Company were extensive. They included a messuage on the south side of Thames Street and part of the Hall offices in Thames Street, nos. 41-49 Queen Street, which included the wine porters' counting house, all the west side of Little Cheapside, Three Cranes Wharf and Hambro Wharf. Three surveyors were appointed to value all this and the compensation finally asked by the Company was £29,181 for the purchase of the property and the damage they would sustain by the opening up of the back of their own premises, namely the clerk's and beadle's houses, when the Queen Street houses were pulled down. A further £1,500 was added for legal and survey expenses, and the Bridge Company was to make good all damage to sewers and drains and lay new ones where necessary. The Bridge Company thought this valuation was much too high and also asked that only the purchase price be considered now and all claims for expenses and damages at the end of the operation. The Company accepted this as reasonable but rejected the offered purchase price of £17,902 and went to arbitration over it. The Bridge Company raised its offer to £20,000, which was rejected also, but the Vintners were willing for them to go ahead and make use of part of Three Cranes Wharf. In the event the Bridge Company realised it would only need temporary occupation of a considerable amount of the property, except for that required for widening Queen Street and the bridge's approach. In March 1817 the two parties entered a contract by which the Bridge Company was to hold Hambro Wharf for two years, at the end of which they would return the unwanted land, paying for that kept. They paid the Vintners £10,000 on account. During the building of the bridge, there is no doubt that the Company suffered a great deal of inconvenience from the effects on the Hall, the noise, the dirt, and above all the laying open of its eastern side as the Queen Street buildings were demolished. So unsafe was the Hall considered that the plate was removed to the custody of the Renter Warden's bankers. At the end of the two year agreement there was a certain amount of dispute between the parties. The Bridge Company needed to retain that part of the premises on which the approach road was built, the ground on which the toll house stood and the part staked out for a road from the approach giving access to Hambro Wharf. When the whole was finally settled, the total sum payable to the Vintners for its property was £11,671, most of which they had already received.⁸

The building of the bridge and the consequent widening of Thames

and Queen Streets entailed the first major structural alterations to the Hall since the seventeenth century rebuilding. The widening of Thames Street meant the loss of the clerk's house at the front of the west wing and the corresponding offices at the front of the east wing. The clerk's new house was further back, level with the Hall itself and by an arrangement with the Bridge Company was built flush against the bridge wall. This was the only site where it could be fitted in, but produced problems over the approach to Hambro Wharf. The eventual solution was to shore up the new clerk's house and make an archway under it to give access to the wharf. The Company then took possession of the wharf from its tenants, Messrs. Sills, in order to clear it and pull down the old warehouses. As part of this operation the Company's wall which separated its garden from the wharf was pulled down and the beadle and stavesmen were ordered to cut down the two mulberry trees for which the garden was famous, and some poplar trees in order for the demolition to be carried out. The garden itself was gradually eaten away over the succeeding years as Hambro Wharf was developed. In 1841 the tenants, Messrs. Chaplin and Horne, were allowed to lease part of it in order to build stables and in 1860 took more. The rest of the garden was made into a yard.

The years of the 1850s saw a general refurbishing of the Hall and apartments. Gas lighting was installed, the names of the Masters from 1800 were placed on a panel in the hall, a new floor was laid in the court room, which was also provided with new chairs and chandeliers, while the drawing room also had a new carpet and furniture, and the exterior of the Hall was repainted. At the same time, the Upper Warden was authorised to spend £50 on prints and engravings for the drawing room. This resulted in the purchase, among other works, of two beautiful mezzotints by David Lucas of Constable's 'Cornfield' and 'Dedham Lock'. During his lifetime, Constable himself had links with the Company. His uncle, David Pike Watts, Master in 1810, had asked him for his opinion of the picture of St. Martin dividing his cloak, painted by liveryman George Robertson in 1773. Constable considered it worth repairing, and under his direction it was cleaned and lined and its frame repaired and gilded. As part of the refurbishing, the kitchen underwent much modernisation in 1850 with a new range, steam boiler, steam closets, copper boiler and hot plate installed. A new smoke jack meant altering the chimney, and Messrs. Bailey who were carrying out the work undertook to install the jack at their own risk and restore the old

manual spits if the innovation proved unsatisfactory. Although gas lighting was laid on in the kitchen in 1853, gas cookers were not installed until 1874, and even then the old range was left intact in order 'that recourse might be had to that mode of cooking if rendered necessary by the failure of the gas'. In 1867 the next major piece of building took place at the rear of the Hall, when the Court decided that the time had come to build a smoking room. This was added as an extension behind the hall, where an office and serving room were replaced by a new waiters' lobby and a corridor leading to the smoking room, itself built on what had been part of the yard. A few years later, extra lavatories were added on the east side of the corridor. The last alteration of the nineteenth century took place in 1883 when a new entrance to the Hall was built. It was formed by reducing the size of the front courtyard and inserting a corridor from the staircase lobby on the west side to the offices on the east. A separate entrance was made for the business premises.⁹

The decline in the numbers of freemen who entered the Company by servitude, and the continued loosening of the Company's ties with the wine trade served to emphasise the other areas of unity between members, chief of which was hospitality. At the two main Company entertainments of the year, Election Day and Lord Mayor's Day, a very high proportion of the livery dined in the Hall. By the middle of the century numbers were great enough to necessitate sittings of more than a hundred on two separate days for each occasion. Earlier in the century, when the freer manners of the Regency period prevailed, there were one or two disturbances at the entertainments. On Election Day in 1815, three of the livery were banned from future occasions, though two were subsequently forgiven when they apologised, and three others were banned for causing disturbances in 1818. The report to the Court on the Lord Mayor's Day Dinner in 1820 made a general complaint about the state of the butlery because many of the waiters had been drunk and three dozen decanters were found afterwards in the passage leading to the garden. As Victorian decorum set in, however, liverymen only failed to receive invitations if they were more than four years in arrears with their quarterage. In the first two decades of the century a ball for members of the Court and their ladies and guests was held annually in the spring for about a hundred persons. This custom seems to have ceased in 1817 when the Hall was affected by the building works for Southwark Bridge and not resumed. There were usually special entertainments on the occasions of national celebrations, coronations, royal jubilees, and in May 1863 the Company

held an entertainment for its own jubilee, the five hundredth anniversary of the granting of its first charter, which coincided with the festivities organised by the city to welcome the Prince of Wales' bride, Princess Alexandra of Denmark. Curiously enough, the Company were in error, celebrating a year too soon, for the charter was granted in 1364, not 1363; it seems to have been a generally held belief, though never among scholars.

In November 1880 the Company enrolled for the first time among its freemen a member of the royal family. Prince Leopold was the fourth and youngest son of Queen Victoria, born in 1853. The Court had first proposed his membership six years earlier, when he came of age, but the prince was a haemophiliac and the state of his health had prevented him accepting the invitation any earlier. He was admitted to the Company on 6 November 1880, and immediately made a liveryman and an honorary member of the Court, receiving his certificate of membership in a valuable casket and a court medal struck in gold. The Master, Sir Francis Wyatt Truscott, was also Lord Mayor, and had already received all four of Victoria's sons at Guildhall. At the banquet held in Prince Leopold's honour that evening, attended by the Duke of Cambridge, the Earl of Hardwicke, Admiral Keppel and a number of distinguished city personages, much reference was made to the Vintners' entertainment of the Five Kings and of Henry IV's four sons. The Company presented an address to its illustrious member on his marriage in 1882 to Princess Helena of Waldeck, but his membership of the Company lasted only for another two years, for he died in 1884, aged 31. The family connection with the Vintners, however, was continued by his daughter, Alice, Countess of Athlone.¹⁰

Sir Francis Wyatt Truscott, Master and Mayor in 1880, was probably the most distinguished vintner of the nineteenth century. He served as sheriff in 1872 and was knighted the same year, but was not admitted to the Company until 1873. He occupied several important offices in the Corporation including that of Deputy-Governor of the Irish Society and Governor of the Queen Anne's Bounty. His banner, carried in the mayoral procession now hangs in the hall. His family's continued connection with the Company is illustrated by the arms of Sir George Truscott and Sir Denis Truscott, both also Masters and Lord Mayors, which also decorate the hall. Sir Francis was not the first vintner of the century to be Mayor. Matthias Lucas, Charles Farebrother and John Hooper having preceded him in the office. The Truscott family's long connection

with the Company was echoed by the family continuity of those holding the office of clerk. After the resignation of William Cole as clerk in 1809, only four men held the office between that date and 1927. Charles Martin was elected in 1809 at a salary of £215 per annum and was succeeded in 1827 by his son and namesake who had been appointed assistant clerk on his father's application in 1821. When Charles Martin, jun., died in office in 1852, the Court decided it was not necessary for the clerk to be a solicitor and elected George Lomas to the post at a salary of £250 per annum. William Hodgson, who had also applied to be clerk, was appointed as the Company's solicitor. George Lomas was succeeded in 1877 by his son Charles, who served as clerk for fifty years. In contrast to the eighteenth century, the office of beadle was as stable in the nineteenth century as that of clerk; only five men held the position, and John Pope served from 1829 to 1876. In 1864, in view of his long and faithful service, his salary was raised to 220 guineas per annum.

The office of bargemaster's mate was discontinued in 1813 when the bargemaster, John Marshall died, and his mate, John Goodacre succeeded to the post. At the same date, the stavesman, Thomas Page (who became beadle in 1821), took over the responsibilities of engineer, previously held by the bargemaster. In 1815 the office of bargemaster was abolished and Goodacre was put on the list of applicant poor. In fact, the Company's association with the Thames rivermen did not cease, for the office of swan-marker replaced and incorporated that of bargemaster. The Vintners still had need of a boatman to conduct the annual Swan Upping expedition. The office to which the Court gave most thought and attention at this period was that of stavesman. In 1811 it reported that the Company was greatly inconvenienced if its servants also held other employment and recommended that in future no-one with another job should be appointed. William Harvey, the stavesman, whose age, infirmity and position at the East India Company warehouses rendered him unfit to continue in his post, was retired on a pension of £25 per annum (the equivalent of his salary). Thomas Page was elected to the post in his stead. The Court laid down the following conditions for his employment: he was to hold no other office and to be in permanent residence at the Hall and to take his orders from the Court and its representative, the clerk. His responsibilities were to keep the Hall, garden and courtyard clean, deliver letters and collect quarterage, attend workmen on the premises, keep the Company's colours and flags in good order and spend his whole time on Company business. His remuneration for this was to be a salary of £63 per annum,

and in 1813 it was increased to 90 guineas, but unlike the clerk and beadle, he received little in the way of fees. In 1859, on the retirement of George Morton, who had served as stavesman since 1822, a special committee of the Court reported on the duties and emoluments of the post. These were similar, but rather more detailed than the duties set out in 1811. The stavesman was to reside in the Hall's lodge and attend to the gate which was to be open 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. and to record the names and business of all who entered. He was to deliver all letters and summons and generally act as messenger to the Court, only absenting himself with its permission. He was to keep the offices at the Hall clean, light fires and take up coals, and clean the courtyard, passages, kitchens, garden, privies, pavement and crossing. He was to aid the beadle setting up and clearing the Hall, to attend the hat-room at all entertainments and finally to attend Guildhall at all common halls, keeping the Company's wicket and seeing that none but liverymen passed through, and escorting new freemen to the Chamberlain's office. The Court also recommended that Morton's successor should be appointed initially as a weekly servant to test his capabilities before a permanent appointment was made. It recommended to the post the beadle's son, John Pope, junior, who was a liveryman, in view of his own qualities and his father's long service at a wage of 25 shillings per week. In fact Pope held the post only until 1862 when he resigned and was succeeded by Thomas Blackwell.¹¹

III

The fullest picture of the Vintners' Company at the end of the nineteenth century, indeed of all the companies, comes from the Report of the Royal Commission on the Livery Companies of the City of London, published in 1884. Prior to the setting up of the Commission in 1880 there had been a great deal of agitation against the companies among the Liberals in Parliament, who wanted their total reorganisation. This would in effect have meant more or less extinguishing the companies as they had existed for centuries. The Liberals pressed for reform on the grounds that the country was losing a great deal of revenue because the Company lands were held in mortmain and therefore no succession duty was paid on them, that a few of the wealthier companies paid their Court members very high attendance fees and all spent far too much on feasting their members. Since, as Hazlitt points out, they were expressly entitled by

their charters to hold their land in mortmain, this particular objection was settled in 1884 by an annual Corporate Tax of five per cent on their corporate property; their trust property was charitable and therefore exempt from tax anyway. It was also true that much of their income which went to their members in fees and pensions was taxed when it reached them. This was not, of course, true of hospitality, but this was not confined to members, since all the companies entertained large numbers of guests, nor were the totals spent on feasting a very high proportion of their annual income.

The companies hated the idea of the Royal Commission, but almost all co-operated with it, and the Report was largely based on the returns each made to the Commission. In fact, the Report more or less vindicated the companies and as a result their situation was far more secure than it had been before, when public attention had been focussed on their rights and privileges and their lavish hospitality. The greatest factor in their favour brought out by the Report was their great charitable and educational work, a factor that had tended to be overlooked by their critics. Their trust income they administered as unpaid servants, and a large proportion of their corporate income each year was used to augment their trust income. The Report also pointed out that much of their property at the time it was given to them, and long afterwards, was of no great value, and it was only with the comparatively recent increase in national prosperity and property values, particularly in the city, that this situation had altered. Many other people, particularly peers like Westminster, Bedford, Cadogan, Portman and Portland, had benefited in a similar manner and nobody was querying how much of their increased income was devoted to charity.¹²

The Vintners' Company's return to the Commission opened with copies of all its relevant charters and byelaws, together with a description of the Vintners' privilege and the Company's formerly exclusive right of landing and delivering all wines imported to or exported from the city or a three-mile radius around it, which was exercised by its tackle porters. The Company had derived considerable financial benefit from this privilege until several Acts in the first decade of the nineteenth century considerably curtailed it. Like the returns from the other companies, the Vintners then gave details of the Company's trusts and charities (see Chapter 9) and of its membership, property and expenditure. In 1884 the Company had 222 known freemen, out of a total 10,000 estimate for all the companies. An exact total was difficult to give because often after

men were made free their company never heard of them again. They changed their addresses, ceased to pay quarterage and eventually were erased from the roll of freemen; sometimes, years later, they claimed relief from the company. Of the Vintners' freemen, 107 were free by patrimony and 115 by servitude. This balance was more or less repeated among the 220 livery, of whom 110 were free by patrimony, eighty-seven by servitude and twenty-three by redemption. Of the eighteen members of Court, three were free by patrimony, twelve by servitude, and three by redemption, indicating that among the older members, a much higher proportion were free by servitude than by patrimony. The Company's total membership was 460. In comparison with some of the twelve great companies this was small; there were upward of a thousand freemen in each of the Goldsmiths and Drapers alone. The Vintners were, however, unusual in the size of their livery, which, as has been shown, consisted of about half the total membership. It was larger than the liveries of any of the Twelve except the Drapers, Fishmongers and Haberdashers, and between two and twelve members were called to the livery every year. There was no limit to its size, but each liveryman had to be recommended by a member of the livery or Court and elected by the Court. Of the total membership in 1884, 131 members were in the wine trade, and in the decade, 1870-1879, seventy-five apprentices were bound to thirty-nine masters following the trade. Each apprentice was still bound in the Hall, when his father or guardian paid the Company a nominal fee and a small sum to the Company's officers and servants, and at the end of seven years, on furnishing proof that he had dutifully served his indentures and on payment of two and a half guineas and one guinea to the Poor Box he was admitted to the freedom. As a freeman he had the right to retail wine without a licence in the city and certain specified towns in the country and the right to claim financial relief from the Company if he was in need. Both rights also extended to his widow after his own death.

The total number of liverymen in the city was about ten thousand at the time of the Commission. In 1697 the Court of Aldermen enacted that no-one be allowed to take up the livery of any of the twelve great companies unless he had an estate of £1,000 or of one of the lesser companies unless he had an estate of £500, and the spirit of this property qualification was still generally observed in the nineteenth century. The Vintners' Company, with its wide livery, probably paid less attention than most to it, but since its fine for the livery was £60.18s. plus two guineas to the Poor Box, with redemptioners paying £105, this in itself

implied some financial standing in the community. The Vintners' liverymen had the same privileges of retailing and relief as the freemen, plus a parliamentary franchise in the city and three entertainments each year. Once a liveryman, a vintner probably had to wait more than thirty years before his turn to be called to the Court, which was, of course, a direct result of the size of the livery; in other companies fifteen to twenty years was more usual. The election of Assistants took place on average once every two years from among twenty to thirty of the most senior livery. To be elected, a liveryman had to be of good repute and never insolvent, since the fine was £108.3s. and three guineas to the Poor Box. Courts of Assistants seem to have been first mentioned in the Grocers' Company in 1379, when six liverymen were chosen to aid the Wardens in their duties; the Vintners' Court did not appear until considerably later. In the nineteenth century, most company courts comprised the serving Master and Wardens and those who had passed the chair, numbers varying between twelve and forty. The Vintners' Assistants were limited to eighteen, the Master and three Wardens, twelve past Masters and two who had not yet served in office. Like most courts, it had entire control of the Company's affairs, its proceedings and accounts were not published and the livery and freemen did not have access to them. There were on average sixteen Court meetings each year and eleven courts of binding. The Company defined the business of its own Court as the election of officers, questions arising from the privilege, the overseeing of the wine porters, the management of their estates, and dealing with applications for relief and for donations to outside charities. Members of the Court had all the privileges of liverymen, and in addition were paid fees for attendance at courts and committees (which usually averaged about £50 per annum to each Assistant, or three guineas per attendance) and usually dined after business. No member of the Court received a pension or charitable donation, and if any applied for such he had to vacate his seat on the Court; the same was true if an Assistant became a professional adviser to the Company, committed a felony or abused the privilege.¹⁸

The Vintners' establishment of paid officials was one of the smallest pertaining to the great companies, consisting of the clerk, chaplain, beadle, stavesman, swan-marker and the clerk's clerk. Of these, the clerk, a liveryman, was the only one who was a member of the Company in 1884, though as we have seen, both beadles and stavesmen had been chosen from the ranks of the Company in the past. The clerk received a salary of £300 per annum, plus 90 guineas for overseeing the wine

porters and their funds, he also received free accommodation, gas and fuel at the Hall. By the standards of the other twelve companies, this was a low remuneration; the highest salary paid to a clerk was £2,000 per annum and most of the important companies paid about £700 per annum. The beadle and the stavesmen, who also received accommodation and salaries of £225 and £100 per annum respectively, and the copying clerk, who was paid £100 per annum, were the only other full time officials. The chaplain was paid 50 guineas per annum for his attendance on the almswomen and ten guineas as the Company chaplain, and the swan-marker was paid £21 per annum for his care of the swans and one guinea for each attendance at the Hall on public occasions, an average of eighteen times a year.

The Report established that the annual income of the livery companies from property, which had been increasing slowly over the centuries, and rapidly in the nineteenth century with the rise in city property values, was for the year 1879–80 between £750,000 and £800,000, a sum exceeding the income of the colleges of Oxford or Cambridge Universities. This did not include a further £15,000–£20,000 a year contributed by Company members in fees and quarterage. The income from property fell into two distinct classes, trust and corporate, and the proportions varied greatly from company to company. The income from trust property each company was bound to apply in accordance with wills, Acts of Parliament, decrees of the High Court and schemes framed by the Charity and Endowed Schools Commission; the income from corporate property each was free to dispose of as it chose, though most companies added to their trust income from this source. The average income from trust properties was about £200,000 per annum and came from about fourteen hundred benefactions; roughly two-thirds of this came from rents and the rest from dividends. Of this total, the companies spent about half on their almshouses and poor members, a quarter on schools and educational charities including those concerned with apprentices, and a quarter on general charities. Many of the charities were for the benefit of provincial towns and villages, the donors' original homes. The average income from corporate property was about £550,000–£600,000 per annum. After making allowance for halls, plate, non-productive property, interest on debts and a proportion saved annually, about £450,000 per annum remained. Of this, the Report calculated that £75,000 was spent on maintenance in the form of rates, taxes, repairs and improvements, £60,000 on salaries for officials and £40,000

on fees to members. £100,000 was spent on entertaining and £150,000 on charity.

For the same year, 1879–80, the Vintners' total income was £10,887, being £9,365 corporate and £1,522 trust. This was by far the smallest for any of the twelve great companies; next came the Salters and Ironmongers, each with more than £21,000, while the Mercers received £82,000 and the Drapers £78,000. Among the lesser companies, the Brewers, Leather-sellers, Carpenters and Sadlers all had larger annual incomes than the Vintners. The Vintners gave to the Commission details of the properties which provided their income, but declined, with respect, to answer any questions concerning the titles to their property, a policy which they believed was being followed by the other companies. Outside London they owned a farm and ninety-nine acres at Boxley in Kent, which was let on a twenty-one year lease at the rackrent of £181.4s.6d. per annum, 4 East Street and 73 High Street, Gravesend, which consisted of part of a warehouse and a shop and premises let at £31.10s. and £60 per annum respectively, also both rackrents. These and the Company's share of the rent-charge on Bellaghy, co. Londonderry, £149.7s.1d. per annum, were its only sources of rent outside London. Inside the city it owned seventeen properties, warehouses, shops and offices, together with Hambro Wharf, let on twenty-one year leases or less at rackrents, and thirty-four other properties let on longer-term beneficial leases at lower rents. Virtually none of the tenants were members of the Company. The management of the property was entirely in the hands of the Court, a committee of which viewed it occasionally and formed an opinion as to its value for letting. The Company also stated that its plate, pictures and furniture in Vintners' Hall were insured for £8,500 and the contents of its wine cellars for £4,000. The Company's Income and Expenditure Account for 1879–80 is set out as a separate table opposite.¹⁴

The case for disestablishing and disendowing the livery companies was rejected by the Royal Commission in a majority of ten to two but it did make some general recommendations. It felt that there should be restrictions on the alienation of the companies' real and personal estates, that their accounts should be published and that the parliamentary franchise should be removed from the livery. It also recommended the appointment of a commission to undertake the reorganisation and redistribution of both trust and part of the corporate income to objects of acknowledged public utility, by which it meant less money should go on entertainments and relief of decayed members and more to schools and hospitals. Many

The Vintners' Company's Income and Expenditure for the year 1879-80

Income

	£	s.	d.
Rents and insurance	9,708	4	6
Irish rent charge	146	7	5
Dividends	606	12	8
Wine porters' fund, balance invested £111.13s.8d.			
Ditto Galé's gift, Lenten dinner fund, invested £21.14s.2d.			
Bindings, freedoms, livery and court fines	250	19	0
Quartermage	100	1	0
Poor Box	25	4	0
Fees on licences to assign etc.	50	8	0
Expenditure exceeding income	124	1	11
Cash balance from last Renter Warden	£11,011	18	6
	£1,183	8	7

Expenditure

	£	s.	d.
By charity	2604	6	7
voted to schools, hospitals etc.	403	6	0
Entertainment and Hall expenses	3,069	13	5
Hall etc. restoration and redecoration	689	14	1
Courts and committees	1,103	11	0
Swan royalty	238	7	11
Lord Mayor's Day procession expenses	260	12	2
Management and office expenses	1,725	17	3
Insurance	177	0	6
Property and income tax	199	9	1
Sundries, repairs, furniture, petty expenses etc.	540	0	6
Invested (balance of decayed members' fund)	£11,011	18	6
Purchase of wine in excess of consumption	51	6	6
Expenditure exceeded income	469	17	8
Cash balance to new Renter Warden	124	1	11
	538	2	6
	£1,183	8	7

of these recommendations were put into practice in the years that followed and although no new commission was set up, the companies themselves altered the balance of their charities. By and large, however, the companies were triumphantly vindicated and entered the twentieth century in a much stronger position than many of their more pessimistic members might have thought possible in 1880. The Vintners' own position was additionally strengthened by the continuing rise in property values in the city where almost all their properties were situated and their income rose proportionately each time a lease fell in.

Epilogue

Whilst it is not proposed to give a detailed account here of the Company's affairs in the twentieth century, major alterations to the Hall, the development of some of the Company's properties close to the Hall, and the reforging of the Company's links with its trade all merit some account. The increased prosperity which resulted from the property developments, culminating in the early seventies, has enabled the Company to re-assume responsibilities for the supervision of the standards of wine and for trade education. In this way it has resumed part of its original role, and the Hall, with all the principal wine trade organisations housed in the Company's new and adjacent building at Five Kings House, is once again regarded as the spiritual home of the wine trade.

In 1906 the Court decided upon major alterations to the Hall and improvements to the whole block of property in the Company's possession between Upper Thames Street and the river. Several schemes were submitted, two of which included the complete rebuilding of the Hall. Luckily, these were rejected in favour of a less radical plan which involved widening Anchor Alley (Vintners' Place) and redeveloping Hambro Wharf and Queen Street Place. This necessitated remodelling only part of the Hall premises. The hall itself, the seventeenth-century staircase, the court room, drawing room and smoking room were left unaltered, but the whole of the east wing, which contained the offices of the clerk, beadle and stavesman, was demolished. A new main entrance was provided from Upper Thames Street next to the court room, with a vestibule and corridor leading to the staircase on the right and to the general offices on the left, with the clerk's office behind. These, with new apartments for the beadle and stavesman above, were built on what had been the courtyard, and had a separate entrance for business purposes, for it was intended

that the main front entrance should be used only on public days. A new muniment room and plate room were built in the basement and improved accommodation was provided for the waiters under the smoking room. The work, completed in 1910, proved much more costly than had been anticipated, partly because it exposed weaknesses in the old building which had to be rectified. The alterations left a site available for a new building at the angle of Queen Street Place and Upper Thames Street, where the old offices had stood, and Thames House was built upon it.

In 1932 the old ceiling in the banqueting hall, which was collapsing from dry rot and death-watch beetle, was replaced by a new one, designed by Mr. Alex Gale, and modelled on a ceiling in Winchester College. New administrative offices were built over the smoking room in 1938–9, and the old ones were converted into cloakrooms. The Hall survived the war with little damage other than broken glass, probably due to the concrete cradle which had been installed above the banqueting hall in 1932. Further alterations to the Hall commenced in 1967 when the kitchens were modernised, and in 1969 the Alex Gale ceiling was decorated in elaborate colours, a scheme which is generally admired but has not been altogether free from criticism. Additional work in the basement and the installation of new lavatories necessitated the Hall being closed during 1971–2, during which period new carpets were laid in the banqueting hall and on the staircase, the hall chandeliers were thoroughly refitted and a fire alarm system was installed.

It was an improvement in the Company's finances which dictated major developments in the early 1970s. When the leases on Kennet Wharf and in Kennet Wharf Lane had run their full term, rather than renew them the Company decided to redevelop the property and to build two office blocks on the sites; in 1974 the Company's office staff moved into the fourth floor of Black Swan House, overlooking the river on Kennet Wharf.¹

The redevelopment of Kennet Wharf Lane also enabled the Vintners to do something very practical on behalf of the wine trade. For some years it had lent the Hall for lectures, examinations and functions connected with the trade, but extensive use by large numbers of students was not conducive to the high standard of preservation which the Hall deserved. The Court resolved, therefore, that the Hall should become 'the cathedral rather than the class-room of the trade', and that purpose-built accommodation for practical activities should be erected in Kennet Wharf Lane. Five Kings House, completed in 1975, is now made available

to various trade organisations, with all of which the Company is closely connected, including the Wine and Spirit Association, the Wine and Spirit Education Trust, the Wine and Spirit Trades' Benevolent Society, the Guild of Sommeliers and the Wine Development Board.

The Company's membership, now totalling about 440, stands much the same as it was at the time of the Royal Commission, and about the same proportion of members (some 25 per cent) are still wine merchants by profession. The balance of members between freemen and livery has altered substantially. Now three-quarters of the members are liverymen, and, of the remainder, some twenty-five are awaiting their turn to be called to the livery. Fewer than a dozen today exercise the privilege, all but one of them operating in London, and the Upper Warden is responsible for a periodic inspection of their premises. Although, therefore, there has been no increase in the number of active wine-traders among the members, the Company's renewed connection with the trade goes back to 1918, when a special committee was set up to consider the best methods of advancing the interests of the trade. This committee was established under the auspices of the Wine and Spirit Association, the trade association, which had assumed many of the Company's historic functions. This close connection with the trade was part of a general move by the great companies to associate themselves once more with the business operations which had originally brought them into being.

The Company's first real opportunity to assist the wine trade lay in the field of education. In the year 1926-7 its first travelling scholarship, worth £250 per annum, was awarded to Samuel Dow (Master of the Company, 1971-2) as part of the University of London's scheme to promote its new degree in Commerce. It was to enable him to visit one or more wine-growing countries, to study not only the techniques of viticulture but also all branches of the wine trade; in addition, he was required, quite appropriately, to acquire a good grasp of at least one foreign language, preferably French. This scholarship has been offered annually (with the exception of the years during the second world war) and its annual value has been increased in line with rising costs; in 1958 an annual bursary was established to benefit a second student.²

In 1952 the notion of wine-education took on a new dimension. In that year the Company and the Wine and Spirit Association set up a joint committee to consider a proposal for a professional examination in the wine trade, to be conducted under the auspices of the Company, with the co-operation of the Association. The examination was designed

for aspiring young professionals over the age of twenty-five, who had served for a minimum of five years in the trade. The examination was to consist of five written papers and three practical examinations to test the candidate's knowledge of all aspects of the trade, but especially in the evaluation, and maintenance of standards, of good wine. The scheme went ahead, and it was decided to adopt the title of 'Master of Wine' for those candidates who were successful. The examination is held annually and there are now ninety-four Masters of Wine – a coveted distinction for members of the trade. In 1967 the Company, in conjunction with the Wine and Spirit Association, formed the Wine and Spirit Education Trust for the purpose of furthering trade education under the Industrial Training Act, and the Company gave the initial capital to enable the Trust to fulfil its objects. The eight Trustees are appointed as follows: three by the Vintners' Company, three by the Association and two by independent bodies. The number of students under training in 1975 was 3,200.³

It was, however, the United Kingdom's entry into the European Economic Community which brought about the most significant extension of the Company's renewed participation in the affairs of the wine trade. On 20 August 1973, the Company was granted a new charter, authorising it to set up a Wine Standards Board. Thereby it took over some of the Government's responsibilities for enforcing the wine laws of the E.E.C. The Board controls a panel of inspectors working throughout the United Kingdom, whose duties include examination of the stock-records which wholesalers of wine must maintain, in order to ensure that wine put on the market is supplied with the appropriate 'accompanying documents' guaranteeing its origin. In many ways this new charter brings the Vintners' Company's relations with the trade full circle, for it is now charged with responsibilities for search and oversight similar to those embodied in its original charter of 1364.

In the Britain of 1977 wine societies, wine clubs, and wine-tastings abound, designed to assist devotees in the purchase and appreciation of good wine. Moreover, there has been a vast revolution in popular taste for wine, as is illustrated by the steadily, indeed rapidly, expanding imports of wine. It is wholly fitting that this ancient London Company, which has for so many centuries influenced, and at times dominated, the fortunes of this country's wine trade, should continue to play an essential part in its present and future evolution.

Notes

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23. *Letter Book G*, pp. 182–3, 208; *ibid.*, pp. 182–3
24. *Letter Book D*, p. 219
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26. *Letter Book D*, p. 117
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30. *Letter Book I*, p. 227
31. *ibid.*; *Memorials*, p. 272; *Letter Book K*, p. 377
32. Baker, *op. cit.*, p. 42; *Letter Book E*, p. 25; *Plea and Memoranda Rolls*, vol. iv, pp. 138–9
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18. Vintners MS 15, 201/3, ff. 73, 89, 104, 152; Vintners MS 15, 201/4, ff. 71, 75, 268; Sharpe, *London and the Kingdom*, vol. 2, p. 167
19. Vintners MS 15, 201/4, ff. 391, 442, 449, 483, 505, 507
20. Vintners MS 15, 201/5, ff. 97, 157, 165, 168, 176, 361, 388
21. *ibid.*, ff. 31, 305, 321, 327, 379; Vintners MS 15, 534/6
22. Vintners MS 15, 201/6, ff. 16, 32v, 37, 39, 53, 60v, 65v, 68
23. *ibid.*, ff. 70, 78, 95, 104, 111, 125v, 130, 152v
24. Vintners MS 201/7, ff. 239, 241, 247, 251, 253, 569, 723; Vintners MS 15, 201/8, ff. 18–21, 237; Vintners MS 15, 534/12
25. *ibid.*, ff. 112, 133; *Royal Commission on the Livery Companies of the*

City of London (1884), vol. 2, p. 669; W. C. Hazlitt, *The Livery Companies of the City of London* (1892), part 2, p. 88

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2. J. R. Woodhead, *The Rulers of London, 1660–1689*, London and Middlesex Archaeological Society (1965), p. 33; Milbourn, *The Vintners' Company*, pp. 88–92; Beaven, *The Aldermen of the City of London*, vol. 2, p. 186
3. W. G. Bell, *The Great Fire of London in 1666* (1923), pp. 23–4, 29; Milbourn, pp. 89–90
4. Bell, pp. 54–7, 115, 166, 211
5. Reddaway, pp. 244–6; Vintners MS 15, 201/5, ff. 1, 24, 103; Woodhead, p. 31
6. Vintners MS 15, 201/5, f. 264; Vintners MS 15, 333/5, Receipts Uncertain, 1667/8, 1671/2, 1668/9 – 1676/7; Vintners MS 15, 201/5, ff. 81, 94
7. *ibid.*, ff. 76, 286–7, 295
8. *ibid.*, ff. 39, 65, 138
9. Vintners MS 15, 201/5, ff. 55, 103, 151, 173, 197, 206, 209
10. Vintners MS 15, 333/5, 1671/2, Extraordinary payments
11. Reddaway, pp. 118–19; B. W. E. Alford and T. C. Barker, *A History of the Carpenters' Company* (1968), pp. 78–9; Vintners MS 15, 201/5, f. 135
12. Vintners MS 15, 201/5, ff. 136, 277, 281, 283, 287, 289
13. *ibid.*, ff. 306, 310
14. *ibid.*, ff. 15, 57, 90; Reddaway, p. 274
15. Herbert, *op. cit.*, vol. 1, pp. 212–20; Vintners MS CC/15 & 16

Chapter VIII

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2. Vintners MS 15, 333/6 for 1696/7, 1706/7; Vintners MS 15, 333/7 for 1726/7, 1736/7; Vintners MS 15, 333/8 for 1746/7; Vintners MS 15, 201/7, f. 243
3. Vintners MS 15, 201/6, f. 106v; Vintners MS 15, 201/8, f. 7; Vintners MS 15, 201/7, ff. 195, 283; Vintners MS 15, 201/11, f. 200
4. Vintners MS 15, 333/6 for 1699/1700; Vintners MS, 15, 201/6, f. 38v;

- Vintners MS 15, 201/7, ff. 189, 195, 307, 324; Vintners MS 15, 201/14, ff. 64, 309, 445
5. Vintners MS 15, 201/8, f. 546; Vintners MS 15, 201/11, ff. 9, 42, 389, 544; Vintners MS 15, 201/12, ff. 36, 87, 203; Vintners MS 15, 201/13, f. 615
 6. *ibid.*, ff. 292–3; Vintners MS 15, 333/9 for 1786/7; Vintners MS 15, 333/10 for 1796/7
 7. Vintners MS 15, 201/14, ff. 311, 322, 403, 418, 443; Vintners MS 15, 201/15, ff. 38, 301, 354
 8. *ibid.*, ff. 246, 354
 9. Vintners MS 15, 201/6, f. 9; Vintners MS 15, 333/7 for 1722/3, 1726; Vintners MS 15, 201/8, ff. 181, 495; Vintners MS 15, 201/11, f. 532; Vintners MS 15, 201/12, ff. 144, 385
 10. *Vintners' Hall, 1671–1971*, p. 7; Vintners MS 15, 201/14, ff. 52, 356, 432
 11. Vintners MS 15, 201/6, ff. 6, 97; Vintners MS 15, 201/13, f. 476 ff.
 12. Herbert, *Livery Companies*, vol. i, pp. 207–8; Vintners MS 15, 201/6, ff. 18, 20, 21, 91v; Vintners MS 15, 378; Milbourn, *The Vintners' Company*, pp. 94–5
 13. Vintners MS 15, 201/6, ff. 9, 17v, 33v, 77v; Vintners MS 15, 201/7, ff. 186, 273; Vintners MS 15, 201/8, f. 495
 14. J. R. Kellett, 'The breakdown of gild and corporation control over the handicraft and retail trade in London', *Ec.H.R.*, 2nd series, x (1957–8), pp. 387–8; Vintners MS 15, 201/8, f. 113; Vintners MS 15, 201/6, f. 116; Vintners MS 15 201/7, f. 301
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 16. Vintners MS 15, 201/7, f. 81; Vintners MS 15, 201/6, ff. 136v, 211; Vintners MS 15, 201/8, f. 353; MS 15, 201/12, f. 237
 17. Vintners MS 15, 201/7, ff. 347, 413, 719; Vintners MS 15, 201/13, f. 613; Vintners MS 15, 201/6, f. 74; Vintners MS 15, 201/12, f. 517; Vintners MS 15, 201/14, f. 1
 18. Vintners MS 15, 201/6, f. 206; Vintners MS 15, 201/7, ff. 33, 70, 105, 123, 128, 133; Vintners MS 15, 201/13, f. 635
 19. Vintners MS 15, 201/7, f. 599; Vintners MS 15, 201/8, ff. 235, 348, 365, 459, 471, 477, 481; Vintners MS 15, 201/13 ff. 487, 632
 20. Vintners MS 15, 201/6, ff. 96v, 87; Vintners MS 15, 201/7, ff. 9, 70, 179; Vintners MS 15, 201/8, f. 195; Vintners MS 15, 201/11, ff.

- 61, 134, 177, 253, 295, 304, 324; Vintners MS 15, 201/13, ff. 119, 121, 635
21. Vintners MS 15, 201/15, ff. 60, 79, 91, 107
 22. Vintners MS 15, 201/11, f. 271; Vintners MS 15, 201/12, ff. 308, 368; Vintners MS 15, 201/14, f. 82; Vintners MS 15, 201/6, f. 205; Vintners MS 15, 201/12, f. 44; Vintners MS 15, 201/13, f. 291; Vintners MS 15, 201/11, f. 536; Vintners MS 15, 201/14, f. 492
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 24. Vintners MS 15, 201/6, ff. 7v, 31v, 37v, 142; Vintners MS 15, 201/12, f. 83; Repertory 110, f. 162
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 26. Vintners MS 15, 201/6, ff. 2, 9v, 195v, 203, 205; Vintners MS 15, 201/7, ff. 16, 64; Vintners MS 15, 201/11, ff. 346, 492
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Chapter IX

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2. Unwin, pp. 208-11; Vintners MS 15, 333/1, f. 165
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4. Vintners MS 15, 364, entries 12, 14, 16, 17, 20; W. K. Jordan, *The Charities of London, 1480-1660* (1960), pp. 20-1, 48-9, 64
5. Vintners MS 15, 364, entry 16; BM Egerton MS 1143, ff. 5, 21, 33; Vintners MS 15, 333/1, ff. 44, 64, 470
6. Vintners MS 15, 364, entries 21, 22, 23, 31, 34; Vintners MS 15, 333/1, f. 500
7. Vintners MS 15, 201/1, ff. 37, 38, 42, 61
8. Vintners MS 15, 201/2, ff. 8, 382; Vintners MS 15, 201/3, ff. 185, 323, 432, 455

9. Vintners MS 15, 201/5, ff. 306, 308, 310, 330, 390; Vintners MS 15, 201/4, f. 143
10. Vintners MS 15, 201/6, ff. 120v, 135, 141, 242v; Vintners MS 15, 201/7, f. 180; Vintners MS 15, 201/8, ff. 118, 213, 235, 320, 443
11. Vintners MS 15, 201/6, f. 254v; Vintners MS 15, 201/7, ff. 14, 196; Vintners MS 15, 201/11, f. 250; Vintners MS 15, 201/12, ff. 44, 473; Vintners MS 15, 201/13, f. 525; Vintners MS 15, 201/14, ff. 130, 453
12. Vintners MS 15, 201/11, f. 92; Vintners MS 15, 201/7, ff. 236, 466; Vintners MS 15, 201/13, ff. 154, 224, 261; Vintners MS 15, 201/14, f. 514
13. Vintners MS 15, 201/6, f. 243v; Vintners MS 15, 201/8, ff. 213, 214; Vintners MS 15, 201/12, ff. 121, 133, 160; Vintners MS 15, 201/14, f. 165
14. *ibid.*, f. 177; Vintners MS 15, 201/15, ff. 120, 359, 393; Vintners MS 15, 201/17, f. 267; Vintners MS 15, 201/18, ff. 13, 621
15. Vintners MS 15, 201/15, ff. 364, 419, 491, 496, 515; Vintners MS 15, 201/16, ff. 46, 49, 57, 102, 122-4, 139; Milbourn, *The Vintners' Company*, pp. 104-109
16. *Report of the Royal Commission on the Livery Companies of the City of London* (1884), vol. 4, p. 553; Vintners MS 15, 201/18, f. 189; Vintners MS 15, 201/23, ff. 313, 383; Vintners MS 15, 201/24, f. 108; Vintners MS 15, 366
17. BM Egerton MS 1143, f. 1; Vintners MS 15, 201/4, f. 105; Vintners MS 15, 364, entry 12; Vintners MS 15, 201/6, f. 136v; Vintners MS 15, 201/12, f. 246
18. Vintners MS 15, 201/16, ff. 490, 523; Vintners MS 15, 201/17, ff. 267, 276, 293; Vintners MS 15, 201/18, ff. 5, 208, 572, 595; Vintners MS 15, 360/1 & 2; Vintners MS FCAA/5, ff. 53-67
19. Royal Commission, *op. cit.*, vol. 4, p. 554; Vintners MS 15, 368; Vintners MS 15, 360/2
20. *ibid.*; Vintners MS 15, 364/ entries 22, 31; Vintners MS 15, 201/6, f. 127
21. BM Egerton MS 1143, f. 56; Vintners MS 15, 333/3, 1618/19; Vintners MS 15, 201/3, ff. 30, 42
22. Vintners MS 15, 201/6, f. 152v; Vintners MS 15, 201/8, ff. 208, 266, 305; Vintners MS 15, 201/11, ff. 208, 478; Vintners MS 15, 201/12, ff. 140, 448; Vintners MS 15, 201/14, f. 70; Vintners MS 15, 201/16, ff. 430, 447; Vintners MS 15, 201/17, ff. 173, 198, 267, 278, 501, 567; Vintners MS 15, 201/18, ff. 133, 591; Vintners MS FCA/3

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24. Vintners MS 15, 201/3, ff. 74, 182; Vintners MS 15, 364, entry 32; Hazlitt, *Livery Companies*, pp. 88, 326; Vintners MS 15, 201/12, f. 60; Vintners MS 15, 201/2, ff. 143, 400
25. Vintners MS 15, 201/6, f. 97; Vintners MS 15, 201/8, f. 245; Vintners MS 15, 201/13, f. 204; Vintners MS 15, 201/17, ff. 354, 398; Vintners MS 15, 201/18, f. 112; Vintners MS 15, 430/1 & 2

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2. Vintners MS 15, 201/16, ff. 398, 465; Vintners MS 15, 201/17, ff. 47, 384; Vintners MS 15, 221/3; Vintners MS 15, 201/24, ff. 318, 404; Vintners MS 15, 391; Vintners MS 15, 392 (FP 83, 85, 100)
3. Vintners MS 15, 201/23, ff. 57, 84, 92-108, 111, 184, 454; Vintners MS 15, 201/24, ff. 43-49
4. Vintners MS 15, 201/23, ff. 566, 604; Vintners MS 15, 201/24, ff. 264, 388; Vintners MS 15, 393 (FP/10-17)
5. Vintners MS CC/13; Vintners MS 15, 390
6. Vintners MS 15, 430/1 & 2; Vintners MS 15, 477; Vintners MS 15, 489; Vintners MS 15, 511
7. Vintners MS 15, 201/17, ff. 267, 523-6, 532, 544-8; Vintners MS 15, 201/18, ff. 1, 9, 82, 92, 98, 547; Vintners MS 15, 430/2
8. Vintners MS 15, 201/16, ff. 18, 189; Vintners MS 15, 201/17, ff. 67, 155, 183, 188, 515-17; Vintners MS 15, 201/18, ff. 121, 130; Vintners MS 15, 423; Vintners MS 15, 246 (LEAS/1-15)
9. *Vintners' Hall, 1671-1971*, pp. 7-12; Vintners MS 15, 423; Vintners MS 15, 201/17, f. 417; Vintners MS 15, 201/23, f. 22; Vintners MS 15, 201/24, ff. 108, 138, 169, 179, 282, 380, 401
10. Vintners MS 15, 201/18, ff. 7, 19, 116, 232, 393; Vintners MS 15, 201/23, f. 593; Vintners MS 15, 201/24, ff. 307, 323, 330, 425-7; Milbourn, *The Vintners' Company*, pp. 70-7
11. Milbourn, pp. 102-3; Vintners MS 15, 201/17, ff. 36-7, 237, 196, 370, 397; Vintners MS 15, 201/18, ff. 13, 432; MS 15, 201/23, ff. 81, 150-1, 210, 214, 262, 271
12. Hazlitt, *The Livery Companies*, pt. 2, pp. 2-11

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13. *ibid.*, pp. 75–7, 80–3; *Report of the Royal Commission on the Livery Companies of the City of London* (1884), vol. 2, pp. 641–63
14. *ibid.*, vol. 2, pp. 664–69; Hazlitt, pt. 2, pp. 84–97

Epilogue

1. Vintners MS AC/31, ff. 137–147, 481; *Vintners' Hall*, pp. 12–15
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Appendix A



The Feast of the Five Kings

Henry Picard's entertainment of five kings is one of the great legends of the city of London and thus worthy of a closer study than is possible in the main text. The five kings supposedly present at his feast were Edward III of England, John I of France, David II of Scotland, the King of Cyprus and the King of Denmark. The story in this popular form dates back as far as 1688, when Joshua Barnes published his *History of Edward III*, and in describing Picard's feast, named 'the kings of England, Scotland, France, Denmark and Cyprus, the Duke of Bavaria, the chief hostages of France and King Edward's sons (excepting the Black Prince then in Aquitaine) and many of the chief nobility of England' as being present.¹ Barnes' source was John Stow, the great Elizabethan antiquary, who gives the account in his *Annales of England* as follows:

Henry Picard, Vintner, Mayor of London, in one day did sumptuously feast Edward, King of England, John, King of France, the King of Cipres (then arrived in England), David, King of Scotland, Edward, Prince of Wales, with many noblemen and other, and after the said Henry Picard kept his hall against all comers whosoever that were willing to play at dice or hazard. In like manner, the lady Margaret his wife did also keep her chamber to the same intent. The King of Cipres, playing with Henry Picard in his hall did win of him fifty marks; but Henry being very skilful in that art, altering his hand, did after win of the same king the same fifty marks and fifty marks more, which, when the same king began to take in ill part, although he dissembled the same, Henry said unto him: My Lord King be not aggrieved, I covet not your gold but your play for I have not bid you hither that I might grieve you, but that amongst other things, I might try your play, and gave him his money again, plentifully bestowing of his own

amongst the retinue: besides he gave many rich gifts to the king and other nobles and knights, which dined with him, to the great glory of the citizens of London in those days.²

Stow puts the feast under the year 1357, in which Picard was mayor, but in his *Survey of London*, where he tells the story more briefly, he puts it in the year 1363 (which, by contemporary dating, ran to 25 March 1364). This was a more likely date, since although the kings of France and Scotland had both been in England in 1357, the king of Cyprus, the key figure in his narrative, had not. Barnes accepted Stow's corrected date and added the names of some others whom he thought might have been present, together with that of King Waldemar of Denmark, thus making the number up to five kings. On the other hand he omitted the Prince of Wales, whom he knew to have been in Aquitaine in 1363. It may be asked why the number of five kings occurred in the first place. The answer is that in the winter of 1363–4, three foreign kings visited England and a fourth received a safe-conduct to come. This was so unusual that it was recorded by the chroniclers of the time and passed into city legend only slightly distorted by the supposition that they were all in London at the same time.

The king of Cyprus was Peter de Lusignan, a descendant of the de Lusignan family of crusaders who had become kings of Cyprus and Jerusalem in the late twelfth century. The crusading blood still ran strongly in his veins and he had been travelling extensively in western Europe trying to gain military support from its rulers for the new crusade called by the Pope. Although handsomely entertained, he had received no tangible aid and he hoped for something more positive from England after her great victories of Crécy and Poitiers. He arrived in London on 6 November 1363 and stayed until the beginning of December, when he departed bearing gifts from the king, including a ship called the *Katherine*, and the king's permission for any Englishman (including his own sons) to go on the crusade if they wished, but without any promise of formal English support. In France, Peter spent some time with King John at Amiens and then went on to Bordeaux to try his luck with the Black Prince.³ David II of Scotland had been married to Edward III's sister Joan (who had died the previous year) and had spent eleven years of his life in far from harsh captivity in England after his defeat at the battle of Neville's Cross in 1346. He was eventually released for a ransom of a hundred thousand marks. Unlike his warrior father, Robert the Bruce,

David liked the English and on his return to Scotland spent much time hankering after the luxuries and comforts of London. He was journeying south on a visit when Peter of Cyprus arrived, and reached London a week after him, in time to enjoy the festivities. He stayed for three months, reaching Scotland again in early March. John of France had been captured by the English at the battle of Poitiers in 1356 and, like his brother king, had been held in 'gentle captivity' in the Tower and elsewhere for several years. By the Treaty of Bretigny he was released in 1360 for a ransom of three million crowns (£500,000), leaving hostages for its payment in London. One of them, his own son, Louis of Anjou, broke his parole and returned to France, and John was so dismayed by this breach of the knightly code and the stain on his own honour, that he insisted on returning himself to captivity in England. He landed at Dover on 4 January 1364 and took up residence at the great royal mansion of the Savoy, where he died two months later.

The fifth of the supposed kings was Waldemar IV of Denmark, who was anxious both to visit England and to meet Peter of Cyprus. He received letters of safe-conduct to come to England, but not before the beginning of February 1364, and there is no evidence that he actually made the journey to England at all. If he did so, it was after Peter's departure, for he was with the German Emperor at Prague on 2 January and arrived at Strasbourg on 24 February. Waldemar does not feature in the legend before Barnes wrote his account, and the latter, presumably discovering the issue of the safe-conduct, put him in to make up the numbers. The Duke of Bavaria also mentioned by Barnes was Albert, son of Queen Philippa of England's sister, Margaret, and the German Emperor, Louis of Bavaria (the Holy Roman Emperor at this date was elected). Albert's uncle, Edward III, made him a knight of his new Order of the Garter, and the young man visited England in 1364 to settle the question of the inheritance of the counties of Hainault and Holland to which his mother and aunt Philippa were co-heiresses.⁴ Again there is no mention of the duke in the earlier accounts of the feast and like Waldemar, he was probably included by Barnes on the grounds that he was known to be in England at much the same time as the feast took place.

Thus it is clear that the five kings of the Vintners' legend, England, France, Scotland, Cyprus and Denmark, did not all dine at the home of Henry Picard on the same occasion. Either he entertained England, Scotland and Cyprus in November 1363, or England, Scotland and France in January–February 1364. Since the main part of Stow's story concerns

Peter of Cyprus gaming with Picard, it seems reasonable to conclude that the feast took place in November 1363 and that the guests of honour were Edward III, Peter of Cyprus and David of Scotland. The inaccurate inclusion of John of France can be traced back to Stow's source, a late medieval manuscript, the *Liber Niger* of 1485.⁵ This was a compilation of earlier documents made under the direction of Thomas Clifford, a monk at Westminster. The great Flemish chronicler, Froissart, who was a secretary to his fellow countrywoman, Queen Philippa, also tells of the great feasts given for Peter of Cyprus by King Edward and others (though he does not mention Picard specifically), at many of which David of Scotland was present.

The question remains, where and when did the figure of five kings first appear in writing? The answer seems to lie in an English fourteenth century chronicle known as the *Eulogium Historiarum*,⁶ This states that when the king of Cyprus came to London he brought with him as a prisoner, the pagan king of Lecco, and another great lord called the Lord of Jerusalem, also a pagan but not a prisoner. The latter was converted, the chronicle says, and was received at his baptism by Edward III, whose name he took. A week later, it continues, David of Scotland arrived in London, 'and so before the end of the Parliament there were five kings present in London . . . such a thing had never been seen since the time of King Arthur, for whose feast at Caerleon six kings were present with himself as seventh'. This virtually contemporary evidence contains the two vital elements of the legend – the idea of a feast and the presence of five kings in London, together with the unifying figure of Peter of Cyprus. It does not, however, go much further in identifying the kings. The converted Lord of Jerusalem remains totally elusive. The king of Lecco has been tentatively identified as Waydot, son of the pagan king of Lithuania, captured in 1362, but there is no evidence to connect him with Peter of Cyprus. Therefore the only contemporary evidence to mention the presence of five kings meant the kings of England, Cyprus, Scotland, Lecco and Jerusalem, but with no evidence to support the presence of the last two. It thus seems clear that there cannot have been more than two genuine kings at Picard's feast besides Edward III.⁷ The fact that Picard entertained not five but only three kings can hardly be held against him. Very few men can ever have rivalled the wealthy vintner in entertaining even three kings, and it is quite possible that he played host to John of France on another occasion. Although the true facts have been known for fifty years, the legend of Henry Picard and the Five Kings

has survived intact and it is to be hoped that the Vintners' Company will always drink their time honoured and traditional toast with five cheers in honour of one of their most outstanding members.

Notes to Appendix A

1. J. Barnes, *History of Edward III* (1688), p. 635
2. J. Stow, *Annales of England* (1605), p. 415
3. *Oeuvres de Froissart*, ed. M. le Baron Kervyn de Lettenhove (1868), vol. vi, p. 384
4. G. F. Beltz, *Memorials of the Order of the Garter* (1841), no. 91
5. *op. cit.*, pp. 384, 376; *Record of the Feast of the Five Princes, Swan Feast*, 1934-35, Appendix I, pp. 14-15
6. *Eulogium Historiarum*, ed. F. S. Haydon, (1860), vol. iii
7. See C. L. Kingsford, 'The Feast of the Five Kings', *Archaeologia* (1916), vol. lxxvii, pp. 119-26

Appendix B



The Swans

The Vintners' Company has enjoyed the privilege of keeping swans on the River Thames since the Middle Ages. Swan keeping on any river is a privilege, confirmed by statute in 1483 granting it only to freeholders with an estate worth five marks a year. On the Thames the only legal owners of swans are the Crown, the Dyers' Company and the Vintners. Among the earliest surviving records of the Company, the account book for the years 1507-1522 shows the custom of swan keeping as well established. In 1509 James, the swanherd, was paid four shillings for taking up the swans in the great frost, and fourpence for boathire; and in the accounting period 1513-1516, 2s.8d. was spent on oats, broken bread and straw for feeding cygnets at the Hall. During the great frost of 1522 as many as thirty-one swans were taken up and fed. Cygnets were often brought back to the Hall either to be cared for, to be eaten at Company dinners or presented to favoured persons as gifts, but it was only in times of very bad weather or severe frost that adult swans needed care. In 1617 and subsequently, the boundaries of the Company's royalty were regarded as Ratcliff and Staines. Early in the sixteenth century it is clear that some sort of swan book was kept, since it is referred to in the 1550-1552 accounts. It was probably a record of the number of swans, the cost of their upkeep, the swanherd's expenses, and the swans given as gifts, but none of these books have survived. At this date the responsibility of the Swan Upping voyage lay with several senior members of the Court who were chosen as Swan Uppers and it was not until the seventeenth century that the responsibility and the expense devolved on the junior, or Corn, Warden. The swanherd or swan marker was almost invariably a Thames waterman and for centuries the post was combined with that of the Company's bargemaster, indeed it still is. In the seventeenth and

eighteenth centuries the Swan Upping voyage was an excuse for corporate festivity, and the Corn or Swan Warden was charged with providing barges or boats to transport the Court and their wives upriver as far as Barn Elms or thereabouts and there entertain them. In the eighteenth century, the Castle Inn at Richmond was a favourite place for dining, and in years when there was no need for the Company to spare expense, there was often a ball held at the Hall. It is now the custom for the Company to hold a banquet called the Swan Feast, not at the time of Swan Upping, but in November.¹

The swan is a protected bird and anyone found harming it or its nest and eggs is liable to prosecution. From time to time the Vintners' Company received reports of birds being killed or molested and on each occasion they acted in consort with the Crown and the Dyers to offer a reward for information and prosecute the guilty party. They also had printed handbills distributed upriver advertising that molesting swans was a criminal offence and also encouraging local fishermen and watermen to protect nests and in case of very bad weather conditions take up and feed the swans. They were always recompensed for doing it; at times when the Vintners' swan population was high, it was almost impossible for their bargemaster and swanherd to aid all their swans, although in the hard frost of 1789 he took up no fewer than 120 birds. In 1976 the Greater London Council agreed to the suggestion of the Company's swan marker and the Thames Water Authority that an ait at Kingston should be used as a sanctuary for injured swans.

The custom of Swan Upping takes place once a year at the end of July or early in August and lasts about one week. The object is to mark that year's young swans with the mark of the owner and differs little in essence now from the custom as it appears in the early sixteenth century records. The task of upping the swans is carried out by the Crown's swan marker, assisted by those of the Vintners' and Dyers' Companies, under the supervision of senior members of the companies. The cob or male bird and the pen, or female, are a faithful pair and each family is therefore easy to distinguish. At two months old the cygnets are too young to fly and can be caught and marked. The practice seems always to have been to divide the cygnets equally among the owners of the cob and pen, and an odd bird is given to the owner of the cob. The cygnets are marked by nicks on the bill. The Vintners' mark used to be a chevron or V and two nicks, now it is merely the latter, one on either side of the bill. The Dyers' mark with one nick on the right side of the

bill only in place of four bars across and one nick. The marks were simplified in 1878 after a complaint from the S.P.C.A., to avoid any possible suffering to the birds and since the early twentieth century, at the request of Queen Alexandra, the Crown swans are no longer marked at all. As well as marking the cygnets, the objects of the Swan Upping voyage are to pinion them so that they cannot fly away and damage themselves on cables and pylons, and also to count the number of swans. The numbers over the centuries have fluctuated greatly. Milbourn gives a variation from about 500 to nine for the Vintners, but an entry in the Court minutes for 1648 declares the game of swans to have been utterly destroyed by soldiers and others, and it was not until after the Restoration that the numbers were built up again.²

Notes to Appendix B

1. Milbourn, *The Vintners' Company*, p. 26; BM Egerton MS 1143, ff. 2, 35, 55v; Vintners MS 15, 201/13, f. 302; Vintners MS 15, 201/14, ff. 38, 43; Vintners MS 15, 201/15, f. 73; Vintners MS 15, 201/17, f. 412
2. Milbourn, *op. cit.*, pp. 25–6; Vintners MS 15, 333/1; Vintners MS 15, 201/3, f. 20; Vintners MS 15, 201/5, f. 260; Vintners MS 15, 201/5, ff. 32, 35; Vintners MS 15, 201/13, ff. 113, 217, 457

Appendix C



The Wine Porters

The Vintners' privilege of retailing wines without a licence is a well known example of early gild rights which has survived until the present day, but what is less commonly known is that until comparatively recently, the Vintners' Company also possessed the exclusive right of landing and delivering all wines imported to or exported from the city of London and a three mile radius thereabout. This right was exercised by the Company's wine porters, or tackle porters as they were sometimes known. These men were not, it should be made clear, members of the Company, but paid servants of it. When the Vintners acquired this right is not clear, but they certainly possessed it very early in their history, for the wine porters were already well organised by 1301. In that year they all took a corporal oath before the Mayor and Aldermen that they would 'well, faithfully and peacefully serve the men of the city and all others of the people and not take more in payment for carrying a tun full of wine or two pipes than the regulation amount'. It was forbidden them, presumably by city ordinance, to handle any tun unless there were twelve associates present, sworn and instructed in the business. In the light of this, it seems slightly surprising that the porters were organised in groups of less than twelve, according to the details of those who took the oath in 1301. There were John le Palmere, master of the 'Newemayne' company and nine fellows, Geoffrey de Rotherhithe, master of the company (not named) and eight fellows, Roger de la Roperie, master of the King's company and eleven fellows, John le Botere, master of the company of the 'Skipup' and ten fellows. Their rates for portorage were laid down as follows: for taking tuns of wine from the ships to the wharf cellar, 2d. per tun, from the vessels to cellars in any lane leading down to the Thames, 2½d. per tun, from the vessels to cellars in the high street of

Thames Street in the parish of St. Martin in the Vintry and elsewhere in the neighbourhood, 3d. per tun, to the lanes running into Thames Street, 4d., and to cellars in the Roperie, 6d. For anywhere else in the city the charge was 8d. and outside the city walls as far as the Bars of the suburbs, 10d. If anyone wanted their wine transported in their own carts rather than in those of the porters, he was charged 4d. per tun extra. In 1369 the porters were allowed to raise their last two charges from 10d. and 4d. to 12d. and 6d. respectively. In later centuries the porters were under the strict supervision of the Company's Court of Assistants, and the Company had a share in their profits. No doubt similar arrangements were current in the Middle Ages also, but no details of them have survived.¹

Little more of the porters is known until the Company's own records commence. At the back of the first volume of accounts is pasted in a petition, dating from between 1507 and 1522, and made to the Company by John Franklin and his nine fellow wine porters in the Vintry. They complained that John Storre and his porters of Botolph Wharf had usurped their position, setting up their tackle in the Vintry every day beside the petitioners and taking away a great part of their livelihood. They asked the Company to take Storre and his fellows to task and allow the petitioners to carry on as they were accustomed to do without being usurped. This dispute illustrates several points about the porters. Supported by later evidence, it suggests that the four medieval companies may have been reduced to two, based on the Vintry and Botolph Wharf respectively, an indication both of the relative decline of the wine trade and the Vintners' role therein; that although the porters ran their own business from day to day, they were firmly under the Company's governance, and that the division among the porters between masters and fellows noted in 1301 continued.

The porters were subject to the discipline of the Company, but they could expect its support in any external disputes. In the period 1534-1537 they were engaged in a 'business' with the porters of the Packers' Company, and the Vintners purchased a copy of the Packers' ordinances and paid the town clerk to solicit their cause to the Mayor and Aldermen. The outcome here is not known, but the Vintners probably emerged successfully, as they did in 1547 when the Court of Aldermen heard a dispute between the wine porters and those of the Fishmongers over the lading and cellaring of wines. It was agreed that the wine porters were to have the exclusive rights to the job, but a few days later as a sop to the

Fishmongers, their porters were permitted to move any wines ready to be taken up that were owned by fishmongers. Individual porters were also protected by the Company; it paid ten shillings for the release of John Carpenter, one of the Botolph Wharf company, from the Counter jail in Bread Street where he had been imprisoned for nine weeks for debt.²

The first details of how the relationship between the Company and its porters was organised occurs in 1610 when a list of ordinances for the 'Porters of the Tacklehouses and their servants' was drawn up. There were now fifteen masters or fellows in the two tacklehouses of the Vintry and Botolph Wharf, and eighteen servants, who swore customary oaths of service before the Master and Wardens when they were taken on. There was a strict hierarchy among the servants according to length of service, and when a master porter retired or died, the most senior servant was presented to the Court to be approved as his replacement. Extra servants or labourers taken on when necessary at the vintage, were excluded from this hierarchy. The servants were paid an ordinary wage, but the master porters worked on a profit-sharing basis. All their receipts and profits were divided into eighteen parts, 'without deceit or concealment', and each of the fifteen masters took one share. The remaining three (later reduced to two) shares were made over to the Company, which paid the rent on their tacklehouses and provided all their working equipment such as ropes, pulleys, carts and candles. In 1610 the clerk of the Company was ordered to keep a day book of the work done and receipts taken, and to enable him to do this the houseman of each team had to present him with a weekly account. Any master who was negligent or dishonest was liable to be fined by the Court. The rates charged by the porters at this date were as follows: 12d. for every tun of wine laid down or drawn out of a cellar within the city walls and in the liberties thereof, 6d. Everywhere between Temple Bar and Westminster it was 20d., and within Westminster, 24d. None of the porters were allowed to receive more, unless it was freely given by the person employing them. In April 1611 it was decided that in order to exercise greater control over the servants, any who absented themselves for more than three days without the consent of three masters, unless clearly sick, would forfeit his seniority and again become the most junior servant. The servants were protected from over-zealous masters by being able to take disputes to the Court for settlement, nor could they be expelled by the masters on their own authority.³

In 1649 the decline in the wine trade led the porters to approach the

Company and give evidence that their earnings were much decreased because there was simply not as much work as hitherto. The Company's response was to order the Renter Warden to pay them twenty nobles as a free gift towards their relief. A few months later, in April 1650, the Vintners petitioned the Mayor and Aldermen because they seemed to fear that they were likely to be deprived of control of their porters. They pointed out that they had had the regulation of the porters time out of mind without intermission, their tacklehouse being as ancient, if not more so, than any company tacklehouse in London, and asked that they be allowed to continue to regulate them according to several past acts of common council. Whatever had led to this petition, the Court of Aldermen appear to have reassured the Vintners and certainly the Company continued to have full control over their porters.⁴

The porters ran their own day to day business under the umbrella of the Company's authority, but any disputes between the masters and servants, or among the masters, was brought to the Court of Assistants for adjudication. For instance, in 1734, one of the masters, Mr. Lucas, laid a charge against his brother masters at a Court of Assistants, and a committee of the Court was set up to look into the matter. It ordered all the masters to attend and bring their accounts and in the event found that Lucas' complaint was justified and several frauds had been committed. The seven most senior masters were fined and to prevent similar occurrences in the future, it was laid down that if any master was found guilty of embezzling money or tackle, he was to be suspended during the pleasure of the Court and for this period of suspension a proportion of his pay would be paid to the person who discovered his crime. After more than one suspension, a master was liable to be dismissed. The Vintners held themselves financially responsible for any wine that was lost through the fault of the porters, but not if it could be proved otherwise, for instance, because cellar entrances were particularly difficult or dangerous to negotiate. If the loss was caused by misconduct or carelessness on the part of the porters then they had to contribute towards the cost of compensation from their wages. The Company defended its porters in a number of legal suits, particularly when its own rights were involved. The Court was informed in 1771 of several suits begun in the Lord Mayor's court against three master porters for laying down brandy when they were not freemen. The Company defended the cases at their own cost, partly because the porters were the Company's servants and partly because what was being questioned was its right to employ its own porters and appoint

men who were foreigners and not free. Even in cases when its own rights were not involved, the Vintners stood by their porters, as in 1787 when Thomas Hanawell, one of the master porters, was summoned into the militia for Surrey, where he lived. The Company did its best to get him exempted on the grounds that their master porters were liable to be called on by his Majesty's purveyors to serve at the royal palaces. The justices of the peace at Southwark, however, declined to accept this as justified grounds for exemption and Hanawell was told he would have to serve or find a substitute. Not that wine porters were unpatriotic during the Napoleonic War, for in 1798 they offered their services as a body, under the direction of the Company, for the defence of the people and property of Vintry Ward in the event of the threatened French invasion.⁵

The system of keeping accounts practised by the porters was a constant source of anxiety to the Company, which tried regularly to improve it. One of the main problems was that it was never difficult for individual masters to neglect to enter up in the accounts money received for any particular job. Several new rules were laid down by the Court in 1767, but are not unfortunately detailed in the minutes. They could not have eliminated the problems because twenty years later a Court committee conducted an enquiry into the way the accounts were kept. It found that the accounts were kept by daily entries in a book at the tacklehouse and these were made up every Saturday night. After the payment of the servants' wages, the rest was divided into shares for the masters and the Company. The Company's money was put into a box, which was opened half-yearly. The committee's recommendation that the book be brought every Monday morning to the clerk's office so that it could be checked and transcribed into an account kept by the clerk, was endorsed by the Court. At the end of the eighteenth century, the Company's share of the wine porters' profits after the payment of bills for tackle was, on average, about £100 per annum, but this increased very rapidly at the turn of the century because of the larger quantities of wines imported. Not only were profits up, but so were the costs of rope and tackle. This led to a re-adjustment of the method of paying bills in 1802. Instead of the Company being responsible for the provision of all tackle, in future it paid one half of the bills and expenses and the cost of the other half was divided into sixteen shares and paid by the Company and the fifteen masters in equal shares. The average profit each master had received annually in the six years previously, 1795-1801, was calculated at £170,

while the servants alleged that with the rising cost of living, their wages of 13s. per week, with few perquisites, was inadequate to support their families. The Company therefore needed to find a way to increase their wages without encroaching on the income of the masters. The four most senior masters, usually elderly men, were not appointed to any walk (a particular area covered by a team of servants headed by a master), and it was decided that a reduction in the number of masters could be made by pensioning off the oldest ones. This would not only release money to increase the servants' wages but also to swell the pension fund for porters and their widows. The customary procedure on the death of a master was for the Court to be informed and the two most senior servant porters put on probation for six months with no extra pay. During this period, the dead master's widow, if he left one, continued to receive his share. At the end of six months, if no objection was made, the senior of the two servants got the job and became the most junior master, all those above him moving up one. Now the oldest and most senior masters who were next to retire on pensions would not be replaced and the total number of masters reduced.⁶

In 1803 another flaw in the accounting system was discovered. Thomas Stubbs, the master porter who acted as housekeeper and kept the accounts, was discovered by his fellows to have stolen several sums of money. Instead of reporting this to the Court, the master porters decided to punish him themselves by ensuring that instead of progressing up the hierarchy of masters, he always remained the most junior of them. The Court was extremely angry when the whole affair came to light, as much at the concealment as at the initial dishonesty. Stubbs was dismissed for peculation and ill-behaviour, although, in view of his long service, he was allowed a pension of £20 per annum for the support of his family. A few years later, in 1812, the more junior masters petitioned the Court because they felt they were suffering from the conduct of the senior masters, who were selling old rope and not only keeping the money for their own use but charging five shillings for expenses when they went out to sell it. They had also recently bought 90 lbs. of candles for use in the tacklehouse, but had appropriated about two-thirds for their own use. Finally, the juniors claimed that the four most senior masters were drawing 18s. a week each and charging it in their accounts as expenses. A Court committee investigating the complaint ruled that the seniors might keep the rope money, but they could certainly not charge expenses for selling it, nor could they charge for candles that had not been used in the tackle-

house itself, and in future the housekeeper was to order and take charge of candles. Surprisingly, the committee recommended that the senior masters and the housekeeper might draw 20s. each per week from the general account, but that was to be the sum total of their perquisites. In addition it resolved that a cash book be kept by each walk, and daily receipts entered. The weekly receipts for each walk were then to be entered into the tacklehouse ledger together with any disbursements. The Company's share continued to be put in the box, which in future was to be opened quarterly and the accounts balanced.⁷

The year 1813 saw the reduction in the number of masters put into effect. One of the senior masters without a walk and the housekeeper had both died and the porters' work had carried on quite satisfactorily without them. If they were not replaced, about £300 per annum would be released and the more senior servants could be given a rise in wages because they were losing an opportunity for promotion and the junior servants could receive a rather smaller rise. At this date there were approximately seventeen servants, their ages ranging from twenty-three to thirty-eight, and the walks they covered were the Docks, Eastcheap, Queen Street, Crutched Friars, Bishopsgate Street, Tower Street, Fleet Street and Old Bailey. The last two named walks and that of Eastcheap were in the charge of two masters each, giving walks to eleven masters in all. It was decided by the Court that if Fleet Street and Old Bailey were to be put in the charge of three masters between the two, one master could be released to act as housekeeper and in future only two of the thirteen masters would be without a walk. In 1820 the Court further reduced the number of masters from thirteen to twelve by pensioning off the most senior master, who was eighty-three years old. At the same time the servants received a wage increase which gave the two most senior servants 30s. per week, the next four, 18s., and the junior twelve 13s. After all expenses were paid, one share of the profit was still made over to the Company, but two more shares were also paid to the Master and Wardens to form a superannuation fund for the master porters and their widows. On the rare occasion when a servant was killed or permanently incapacitated while working he or his widow also received a pension, but in the normal course of events a servant could expect to be promoted to master after about ten years' service. All new servants had to be approved by the Company and submit character testimonials.

The reason that the Company felt it necessary to reduce the number of master wine porters in the early nineteenth century was that from this

date it lost its monopoly on the transport of wines imported and exported from the city. This was due to the setting up of the West India and London Dock Companies. In 1803 the Vintners applied for permission to set a new tacklehouse for its porters at Wapping to serve the two new docks and for the porters to have free access for removing wine landed there. The Dock Companies were not willing to recognise the porters' right of free ingress and egress, and the Vintners had a case prepared for counsel's opinion. They also had reason to complain that various persons were emulating the dress of their porters and stealing their work. They pointed out that this was depriving the public of the Company's compensation against losses by accident or inexperience and notice was given that the genuine porters wore the Company's insignia, in silver if they were masters, in brass if they were servants. Technically any freeman employing porters other than those of the Company for moving wine was liable to penalties under the city byelaws, but from this period, the Company was unable to enforce its monopoly where the London Docks were concerned and in 1805 it calculated that since the opening of the Docks, it and its porters had lost an estimated sum of £1,188.13s. 4d. It applied to recover compensation from the Dock Companies, and in this was successful, but the porters never regained their monopoly.

With the retrenchment introduced over the next two decades in the form of reducing the number of masters, the porters managed to keep their profits on an even keel until about the middle of the nineteenth century. By the early 1840s, however, they were seriously worried by the decline in business. This was due largely to competition from other sources once they had lost their monopoly, but as the century wore on, their livelihood was further eroded by technical advances. Lifts and other facilities introduced by wine merchants in their cellars, made the lowering of wine into them less risky and the Company's specialist porters increasingly redundant. In 1883 a Court committee submitted a report on the decline in the wine porters' business. The receipts of each master had dropped from £132.4s.4d. a decade previously to £82.5s.6d., a loss of about £1 per week in their income. It was the firm belief of the clerk and three senior master porters, moreover, that the decline would continue. The porters' fund investment was £7,638.5s.11d., producing £221.13s. per annum, and the committee recommended that it be re-invested to produce more and that two-fifteenths of the net profits currently being added to it should henceforth be added to the masters' shares, thus in effect reducing the number of shares from fifteen to

thirteen. This would increase each master's share immediately by about £14 per annum. It also recommended that no new master be appointed until their numbers had been reduced from twelve to eight and that the provision and fixing of posts and sockets at wine merchants' premises, hitherto considered the perquisite of the servants, should now be left to the masters and the money paid for the service added to the profits. In 1894 the number of masters was further reduced to six and the number of servants reduced. This process of declining profits followed by a reduction in the number of porters continued inexorably during the first half of the twentieth century. The porters' accounts ceased in 1956 and they finally stopped practising their craft in 1963. For some time past the porters had assisted at the Hall, cleaning it and preparing it for functions, and in 1963 the three remaining porters were absorbed into the permanent staff at the Hall, the last of a long and honourable line of Company servants.⁸

Notes to Appendix C

1. *Letter Book C*, p. 111; *Letter Book G*, p. 242
2. BM Egerton MS 1143, f. 80; Vintners MS 15, 333/1, ff. 119, 63; Repertory 12, ff. 307v, 308v
3. Vintners MS 15, 201/2, ff. 12-13, 44
4. Vintners MS 15, 201/4, ff. 297, 309
5. Vintners MS 15, 201/7, ff. 543, 551; Vintners MS 15, 201/12, ff. 207, 478; Vintners MS 15, 201/13, f. 550; Vintners MS 15, 201/15, f. 199
6. Vintners MS 15, 201/12, f. 34; Vintners MS 15, 201/14, f. 32; Vintners MS 15, 201/15, ff. 494, 503; Vintners MS 15, 343/1, ff. 1-8
7. Vintners MS 15, 201/16, f. 6; Vintners MS 15, 201/17, f. 308
8. Vintners MS 15, 343/1, ff. 1-8, 23-5; Vintners MS 15, 343/2, ff. 227-30, 300; Vintners MS 15, 201/16, ff. 33-4, 38, 57, 272, 521; Vintners MS 15, 201/17, f. 337

Appendix D



The Company's Property c. 1582

At the beginning of the Company's volume of accounts for the period 1582-1617 is a list of the property then in its possession, which is given as follows:

'Remember the good benefactors and founders of the Company of Vintners.

Our Hall: Sir John Studdy, knight, did enfeof John Micholl, Alderman, of his manor in the Vintrie now being our hall and of the tenements thereunto adjoining between Studdy's Lane on the east and Cressingham's Lane on the west and the King's street on the north. And John Micholl did demise the same lands to John Killick, his executor, who did enfeof Guy Shulldham, William de Lunes, Thomas Acton and William Abraham, and Guy Shulldham did survive the rest and he by his last will and testament did demise the premises to the Company and their successors forever, anno 1446, 25 Henry VI

Buttolphe Wharf: John Wakell, Alderman, did convey the tenement and wharf in Thames Street near Buttolphe Wharf to Geoffrey Dalling, Alderman, who did enfeof Symon Seman, Richard Meryvall, William Scarborough and Thomas Crofton, which said Thomas Crofton survived the rest and he by his last will and testament demised the same premises to this Company and their successors for ever, in anno 1438, 17 Henry VI

Lumbard Strete: John Wakell did also convey the tenement and alley in Lumbard Strete to Edward Grymston his executor who did enfeof Simon Seman, Alexander Sprott, William Scarborough and John Killick which said John Killick did survive the rest and he by his last will and testament demised the same lands to this Company and their

successors forever in pure and perpetual alms, in anno 1438, 17 Henry VI

Fryday Strete: William Hervy did convey the Beare in Fridaie Strete and certain tenements in the Vintry to Thomas Stile who did enfeoff Symon Adam, Thomas Walsingham and William Scarborough of the same lands, Thomas Walsingham and William Scarborough did release their right to Symon Adam and he demised the same to this Company and their successors forever, in anno 1442, 20 Henry VI

Flete Strete: Thomas Walsyngham, Richard Rowe and divers others did enfeoff Thomas Acton, Robert Kingston, William Stafford and others of two tenements in Flete Strete to the use of this Company and of their successors

Harteshorne: Richard Rowe, Guy Shuldham, Thomas Hanshurde and William Stafford, being seized of the tenement and alley called the Hartshorne at Chrichurch [*sic*], the said Richard, Guy and Thomas died seized and the said William Stafford survived who demised the same tenement to this Company, in anno 1466, 6 Edward IV

Elbow Lane: Nicholas Kent by his last will and testament demised the tenement in Elbow Lane and Spittle Lane in the Vintry to this Company and their successors forever, in anno 1467, 7 Edward IV

Eastchepe: Thomas Rogers by his last will and testament demised the tenement in Eastchepe and Buttolphe Lane to this Company and their successors, in anno 1487, 3 Henry VII

Gracechurche: Thomas Lewys by his last will and testament demised the tenement against Gracechurche to this Company and their successors, anno –

Bowe Lane: Thomas Bayon by his last will and testament demised the tenement called the Blewe Bore in Bowe Lane to this Company and their successors forever, 1497, 12 Henry VII

Lyme Strete: Christopher Barker, King at Arms, by his last will and testament demised three tenements in Lyme Strete to this Company and their successors forever.

Crowchers Place: Sir James Spencer, Knight, Lord Mayor of the Citie of London, did convey the great messuage called Crowchers Place on Garlickhive [*sic*] to the use of this Company and of their successors forever, anno 1527, 20 Henry VIII

In Kent: Stephen Mason by his last will demised the farm at Wavering in the parish of Boxley in Kent to this Company and their successors forever

Foster Lane: Four tenements in the parish of St. Michael in the Querne, three tenements in Foster Lane, three tenements in Garlickhive and one other tenement in Soper Lane were purchased of Gunter and Hobson from King Edward 6 anno 2

Blacke Friers: Stephen Skidmore by his last will in writing enrolled in the hustings in London 28 Elizabeth, demised certain tenements in the Blacke Friers in London after the death of Hellen his wife to this Company and their successors forever to this intent and purpose ensuing, viz.'

(Details then given of the annual charitable payments to be made.)

Appendix E



The Coat of Arms of the Vintners' Company

The Company's coat of arms, sable, a chevron between three wine tuns argent, was granted by Clarenceux King of Arms in 1447. The original grant has not survived, but the arms were confirmed at the 1590 and 1634 Visitations of London.

The crest and supporters were not granted until 1957.

Crest: 'on a wreath argent and sable a caravel or laden with tuns proper, the sails gules the mainsail charged with a cartwheel or and from the masthead a pennon argent.' The caravel was a fast, late medieval merchant ship, and loaded with wine tuns symbolises the Company's connection with the wine trade. The mainsail bears the arms, gules a cartwheel or, of St. Martin of Tours, the Company's patron saint.

Supporters: 'on either side a swan the dexter a cob the sinister a pen, both nicked in the beak with the mark of the Company all proper about the neck of each a ribbon azure pendant therefrom a bunch of grapes also proper.' The significance of these supporters needs no explanation.

Motto: Vinum exhilarat animum (wine gladdens the spirit). Registered in 1822.

The Company was first granted a seal in its charter of incorporation, 1437. The first example of the seal in the Company's archives dates from 1594 and the matrix of this seal is still in the Company's possession. It shows on the obverse St. Martin dividing his cloak with the beggar and on the reverse a wine tun.

Appendix F



Masters of the Company

1427	Thomas Gwyn
1428	Alexander Sprott
1434	Guy Shuldham
1435	Hugh Dene
1436	William Scarborough
1437	John Woking
1438	William de Lunes
1440-1441	Guy Shuldham
1442	William Abraham (Sheriff 1447)
1443	Thomas Style
1444	William de Lunes
1445	William Abraham
1446	Thomas Acton
1449	William Abraham
1450	William Abraham
1451	Richard Rowe
1466	John Pemberton
1492	John Qwynson
1495	Richard Wood
1498	Roger Ford
1503	John Hatfield
1504	Richard Wood
1507-1510	John Hatfield
1510-1513	John Kirkeby
1513-1516	John Scape
1516-1519	James Spencer (Alderman: Mayor 1527)
1519-1522	Robert Scras

1522-1525	John Sandell
1525-1528	James Spencer
1528-1531	John Husee (Chamberlain of London)
1531-1534	Richard Hilton
1534-1537	James Spencer
1537-1540	Robert Barker
1540-1543	Christopher Barker
1543-1546	Alan King
1546-1548	Stephen Mason
1548-1550	James Stavely
1550-1552	Thomas Leigh
1552-1554	David Gittins
1554-1556	John Gylmyn
1556-1558	John Strelley
1558-1560	John Cater
1560-1561	Alexander Carlell
1561-1562	David Gittins
1562-1564	Thomas Lowe
1564-1566	William Andrewes
1566-1568	James Marsten
1568-1570	Edward Lane
1570-1572	William Coxe
1572-1574	John Cater
Nov. 1574-June 1576	Stephen Skidmore
July 1576-July 1578	William Abraham
1578-1580	George Crowther
1580-1582	Cuthbert Buckle (Alderman: Mayor 1593)
1582-1584	Henry Pranell
1584-1586	Robert Withens
1586	William Abraham
1587	Thomas Waye
1588	Christopher Gibson
1589	Cuthbert Buckle
1590	Cuthbert Buckle
1591	Brian Pattinson
1592	Thomas Walker
1593	John Edwardes
1594	John Pinder
1595	Hugh Brawne

1596	Robert Newman
1597	Ralfe Fitch
1598	John Alderson
1599	William Relffe
1600	Clement Skidmore
1601	Edward Ellyott
1602	Andrew Goodyere
1603	Lawrence Caldwell
1604	Richard Humble
1605	Thomas Farrington
1606	John Domelow
1607	Richard Jacob
1608	William Williamson
1609	Ralphe Baylie
1610	John Bowssar
1611	James Hodgson
1612	Anthony Whaplet
1613	George Needler
1614	Henry Wetherfield
1615	Bryan Kynaston
1616	Edmund Doubleday
1617	John Edwards
1618	Richard Sleight
1619	William Bonham
1620	Henry Jackson
1621	Richard Allanson
1622	Christopher Allanson
1623	Christopher Woodward
1624	Henry Edmonds
1625	John Muscott
1626	John Hide
1627	Thomas Hutchinson
1628	William Bonham
Feb. 1628/9	John Muscott
Mar. 1628/9	George Needler
1629	George Robins
1630	Richard Bridger
1631	Henry Parkinson
1632	George Etheridge

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- 1633 Capt. John Milward
1634 Richard Davis
1635 William Bowyer
1636 Robert Shawe
1637 William Abell (Alderman)
1638 John Hart
1639 Edward Kynaston
1640 Stephen Parkinson
1641 John Bludworth
1642 William Wilde
1643 John Hicks
1644 Jacob Bonamy
1645 George Gopsell
1646 Ralph Kinge
1647 Nicholas Clegatt
1648 Richard Lee
1649 Robert Childe
1650 Mark Hildesley (Alderman)
1651 William Hancock
1652 Cordwell Hammond
1653 George Griffith
1654 William Fielde
1655 Henry Croone
1656 Thomas Langton
1657 Henry Wollaston
1658 William Wormell (ref. Court Book) or
Sir Thomas Bloodworth (ref. Account Book)
1659 Sir Thomas Bloodworth (Alderman: Mayor 1665)
1660 Sir William Wale
1661 Humphrey Halley
1662 Samuel Foot
1663 John Wilcocks
1664 Philip Dallowe
1665 Sir William Wale
1666 Lt. Col. Thomas Cox
1667 Richard Spencer
Thomas Werge
1668 Edward Midwinter
1669 Henry Chittie

1670	Thomas Alcocke
1671	Thomas Benson
1672	William Allen
1673	John Stint
1674	Edward Hunt
1675	Samuel Wilson
1676	William Roberts
1677	Richard Taylor
1678	Daniel Rawlinson
1679	John Billingsley
1680	Daniel Nicholl
1681	John Kent
1682	Richard Weedon
1683	———
1684	Sir Samuel Dashwood (Alderman: Mayor 1702)
1685	———
1686	———
1687	Sir Thomas Rawlinson (Alderman: Mayor 1705)
1688	———
1689	———
1690	———
1691	———
1692	———
1693	———
1694	———
1695	———
1696	Col. John Genew
1697	———
1698	Sir Bartholomew Gracedieu (Alderman: Sheriff)
1699	Gilbert Heathcote (Alderman: Mayor 1710)
1700	Lewis Wilson (?)
1701	John Leverige (?)
1702	John Powell
1703	Daniel Tayler
1704	John Cannon
1705	Thomas Cox
1706	Edward Cooke
1707	William Bennett
1708	Richard Guy

	1709	Gibbon Bagnall
	1710	John Brown
	1711	John Worbey
	1712	Edward Robinson
	1713	Joseph Lawrence (Alderman)
	1714	Edward Hamond
	1715	Edward Hamond
	1716	George Clarke
Feb.	1717	Edward Hamond
Feb.	1717	Samuel Stanton
	1717	Samuel Stanton
	1718	Richard Collett
	1719	John Tash
	1720	Henry Fisher
	1721	William Waldron
	1722	Thomas Preston
	1723	John Tayler
	1724	John Shepheard
Jan.	1725	Benjamin Travers
	1725	John Tindall
	1726	John Thompson (Alderman: Mayor 1736)
	1727	Capt. Jeremiah Jones
	1728	Thomas Preston, Jnr. (Alderman)
	1729	Benjamin Braund
	1730	William Harris
	1731	Henry Collins
	1732	John Willis
Jan.	1733	John Knapp
	1733	James Browne
	1734	Edward Hodsdon
	1735	William King
	1736	William Webb
	1737	Adrian Estwick
	1738	Roger Ubank
	1739	Daniel Rawlinson
	1740	Henry Woodcock
	1741	Daniel Lambert (Alderman: Mayor 1741)
	1742	Samuel Curson
	1743	John Innocent

	1744	Richard Roycroft
	1745	Nicholas Lambert
	1746	Benjamin Allen
	1747	William Cornelius
	1748	George Smith
	1749	James Langston
	1750	James Anderton
	1751	Thomas Munday
	1752	Joseph Crowcher
Feb.	1753	Henry Woodcock
	1753	John Champion
	1754	Thomas Overbury
	1755	John Whitehead
	1756	Castle Thorpe
	1757	Thomas King
	1758	Michael Martindale
July	1758	Thomas Dyose
	1759	Richard Russell
May	1760	Richard Roycroft
	1760	Thomas Merrick
	1761	George Harris
	1762	William Barton
	1763	Isaac Matthews
	1764	Joseph Jones
	1765	John Stevenson
	1766	Roger Cole
	1767	John Twyford
	1768	Brackley Kennet (Alderman: Mayor 1779)
	1769	William Hayne
	1770	William Wylde
	1771	John Hayward
	1772	John Usborne
	1773	William Smith
	1774	William Scullard
	1775	Francis Todd
	1776	Benjamin Kenton
	1777	John Bates
	1778	Thomas Borwick
	1779	Philip Bell

	1780	Philip Rowden
	1781	John Loveday
	1782	Thomas Vickers
	1783	George Kendall
	1784	Richard King
	1785	Thomas Walker
	1786	Robert Mackreth
	1787	William Greenby
	1788	John Rose
	1789	Thomas Holdsworth
	1790	William Rock
	1791	Josiah Lucas
	1792	Thomas Wright
	1793	Samuel Bicknell
	1794	John Thorne
	1795	Robert Coulson
	1796	Thomas Bateman
	1797	John Wright
	1798	Robert Walker
	1799	Samuel Durham
	1800	Lawrence La Forest
	1801	John Bleaden
	1802	Thomas Simpkin
	1803	William Pashley
	1804	Thomas Reynolds
	1805	Robert Rich
	1806	John Williams
	1807	George Wiltshire
	1808	James Wright
	1809	Robert Smith
Mar.	1810	David Pike Watts
	1810	John Leech
	1811	Robert Gray
	1812	William Chatfield
	1813	Charles Bartrum
	1814	Richard Frisby
	1815	William Harrison
	1816	William Marriott
	1817	Matthias Prime Lucas (Alderman: Mayor 1827)

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- 1818 Richard Jennings
 - 1819 John Farley
 - 1820 Charles Stutfield
 - 1821 Thomas Shelton
 - 1822 Alexander Harper
 - 1823 Isaac Hensley
 - 1824 Stephen Groombridge
 - 1825 Thomas Bennett
 - 1826 William Laforest
 - 1827 Jeremiah Evans
 - Aug. 1827 Carteret John Halford
 - 1828 Christian Tawke
 - 1829 John Capel
 - 1830 John Henry Peacock
 - 1831 John Platt
 - 1832 James Willis
 - 1833 Henry Bates Smith
 - 1834 John Drinkald
 - 1835 Charles Farebrother (Alderman: Mayor 1833)
 - 1836 Thomas Butler
 - 1837 William Willis
 - 1838 Matthias Prime Lucas
 - 1839 Thomas Wright
 - 1840 Gilpin Gorst
 - 1841 Thomas Bennett
 - 1842 Robert Gray
 - 1843 Robert Hitchens
 - 1844 Louis David Jaquier
 - 1845 Eugenius Fenning
 - 1846 Silvanus Phillips
 - 1847 John Jackson Cuff
 - 1848 John Kaye
 - 1849 John Kinnersley Hooper (Alderman: Mayor 1847)
 - 1850 Richard Valentine Hooper
 - 1851 Thomas Henshaw
 - 1852 Charles Farebrother
 - 1853 Elhanan Bicknell
 - 1854 William Garland
 - 1855 John Radley

	1856	Charles Farebrother
	1857	Edward Simon Stephenson
	1858	Eugenius Fenning
	1859	Joseph Stubbs
	1860	Henry Gardner
	1861	William Henry Hawkins
	1862	William Hodgson
	1863	Charles Webb
	1864	Joseph Chater
	1865	William Stutfield
	1866	Frederick Owen Dickens
	1867	Samuel Ingall
	1868	William Garland
	1869	William Potter
	1870	Henry Aste
	1871	Robert Richmond
	1872	James Gaby Breach
	1873	Frederick Willis
	1874	Robert Bacon
	1875	George Daniel Naylor
	1876	Robert Gray
	1877	Henry Goodenough Smith
	1878	Frederick Barron
	1879	John Alexander William Harper
	1880	Sir Francis Wyatt Truscott (Alderman: Mayor 1879)
	1881	Robert Gillman
	1882	Alfred Williams Bingley
April	1883	William Stutfield
	1883	Robert Gillman
	1884	Frederick Webb
	1885	Richard Berry
	1886	Benjamin Standring
	1887	Edward Norton Harper
	1888	William Watkins
	1889	Henry Butler
	1890	George Richardson
	1891	Henry White
	1892	Sir Francis Wyatt Truscott

	1893	Charles Hill Devey
	1894	Charles Gassiot
	1895	William Bellingham
July	1896	Henry Butler
	1896	Algernon Sidney Bicknell
	1897	Horace Alfred Frisby
	1898	Percy Bicknell
	1899	Frederick Stutfield
	1900	Barton Stutfield
Oct.	1900	George Richardson
	1901	John Aste
	1902	Charles Joseph Tuffill
	1903	Alfred Aste
	1904	Howard Charles Jones
	1905	Alfred Burton
	1906	Walter Green
	1907	William Aste
	1908	John Aste
	1909	Revd. Henry Richard Cooper Smith
	1910	Francis Plews Bacon
	1911	Daniel Fenshaw Tuffill
	1912	Francis Plews Bacon
	1913	Robert Gray
	1914	Sir Homewood Crawford
	1915	Sir George Wyatt Truscott, Bt. (Alderman: Mayor 1908)
	1916	Benjamin I'Anson Breach
	1917	Staff Paymaster Commander Charles Greenwood
	1918	Charles Breach
	1919	Edward Pritchard Burton
	1920	Arthur Bellingham
	1921	Charles James Powell
	1922	Henry Dexter Truscott
	1923	Hubert Alfred Butler
	1924	William Pritchard Pulley
	1925	John Stewart Watkins
	1926	Sir Alfred Louis Bower, Bt. (Alderman: Mayor 1924)
	1927	Benjamin I'Anson Breach

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- 1928 Charles Breach
 - 1929 Leicester Morgan Reed
 - 1930 Lt. Col. Maldion Byron Bicknell
 - 1931 Edwin Hanson Freshfield
 - 1932 James Henry Todd
 - 1933 Cécil Holden White
 - 1934 Major General the Right Honourable Alexander
Augustus Frederick William Alfred George
Cambridge, Earl of Athlone, K.G., G.C.B.,
G.C.M.G., G.C.V.O., D.S.O.
 - 1935 Robert Hussey Cunningham
 - Nov. 1935 The Earl of Athlone, K.G.
 - 1936 Spencer Joseph Mabey
 - 1937 John Sell Cotman
 - 1938 Capt. William John Todd
 - 1939 Ronald Martin Williams
 - 1940 Edward William Cecil Bodle
 - 1941 Percy Collins Litchfield, M.C.
 - 1942 Lt. Col. Sir Assheton Pownall, O.B.E., T.D.
 - 1943 John Reginald Quekett Bartlett
 - 1944 George William Herbert Whelon
 - 1945 Percy Collins Litchfield, M.C.
 - 1946 George Ireland Russell, C. de. G.
 - 1947 Lt. Col. Sir Assheton Pownall, O.B.E., T.D.
 - 1948 Esmond Burton
 - 1949 Oswald Thomas Norris
 - 1950 Paymaster Commander Harold Birch Tuffill,
C.B.E., R.D., R.N.R.
 - Nov. 1950 Oswald Thomas Norris
 - 1951 Major Richard Albert Belcham Smith, M.C.
 - 1952 Edgar Webster Webster-Jones
 - 1953 H.R.H. Henry William Frederick Albert, Duke of
Gloucester, Earl of Ulster, Baron Culloden, K.G.,
K.T., K.P., G.C.M.G., G.C.V.O.
 - 1954 Sir Noel Vansittart Bowater, Bt., G.B.E., M.C.
(Alderman: Mayor 1953)
 - 1955 Sir Denis Henry Truscott, T.D.
(Alderman: Mayor 1957)
 - 1956 Alexander John Buckley Rutherford

- 1957 Hon. Laurence John Evelyn Twistleton-
Wykeham-Fiennes
- 1958 Brigadier Lorne MacLaine Campbell, V.C.,
D.S.O., T.D.
- 1959 Eric Grant Evans
- 1960 Jonathan Lionel Percy Denny, M.C.
(Alderman: Mayor 1965)
- 1961 Frederic St. Kevin Anderson
- 1962 Clifford Lowe Platt
- 1963 Joseph Meyler Symmons
- 1964 Air Chief Marshal Sir Christopher Lloyd Courtney,
G.B.E., K.C.B., D.S.O.
- 1965 Tufnell Charles Burchell, T.D.
- 1966 Francis Arnold Bradshaw Everington
- 1967 Bruce Edward Todd, T.D.
- 1968 Bernard Eric Doughty Cuddon
- 1969 Col. Frank Reginald Follett Holt, T.D.
- 1970 Arthur Holbrow Stanton, M.B.E., T.D.
- 1971 Samuel Dow
- 1972 Archibald Richard Sanford Hodgson, D.S.C.
- 1973 Sir Anthony Richard Wagner, K.C.V.O.
- 1974 Arthur Holbrow Stanton, M.B.E., T.D.
- 1975 John Harradine Mason, D.S.O., T.D.
- 1976 Anthony John Kentish

Compiled by Mrs. E. Glover

Appendix G



Clerks of the Company

- 1537 Adam Wright
- 1554 Thomas Agar
- 1572 John Knell
- 1575 Robert Muscropp
- 1578 Henry Beverley
- 1604 Lawrence Minshull
- 1608 John Child
- 1648 William Doughtie
- 1655 Philip Hinton
- 1671 Edward Ange
- 1695 John Ange
- 1723 George Barnardiston
- 1726 John Preston
- 1732 Jarvis Wilcocks
- 1736 William Bedell
- 1788 William Cole
- 1809 Charles Martin
- 1827 Charles Martin, Jnr.
- 1852 George Lomas
- 1877 Charles Lomas
- 1927 Paymaster Commander Harold Birch Tuffill,
C.B.E., R.D., R.N.R.
- 1947 Lt. Commander William Howard Lloyd Mead,
R.N.V.R.
- 1969 Commander Ronald Douglas Ross, R.N.

Compiled by Mrs. E. Glover

Appendix H



Beadles of the Company

From before	1510	William Walpole
	1513	Adam Wright (later the first clerk)
	1537	Edmund Penson
	1552	Thomas Wolverston
	1566	Edward Okyns
	1610	Thomas Dyke
	1614	Thomas Seman
	1617	Nicholas Hill
	1625	John Scotton
	1657	Joseph Rogers
	1668	Richard Matthews
	1683	Joseph Walbank
	1689	Allen Wilson
	1711	Edward Wilson
	1724	Charles Lee
	1730	Giles Hooper
	1742	John Beete
	1756	William Towers
	1760	Edward Saunders
		Ralph Barker
	1761	Ralph Barker
	1774	William White
	1776	George Noble
	1778	Martin Greenwood
	1780	George Swinnerton
	1786	Edmund Atkinson
	1796	Richard Andrews

1821	Thomas Page
1826	George Morton
1829	John Pope
1876	Henry Magee
1901	Henry Allen
1916	Frederick Arthur Jackson
1932	William Charles Rule
1946	Bertram Arthur Graver
1954	Henry Richard Phillips
1969	Peter Stuart Norris

Compiled by Mrs. E. Glover

Appendix I



The Vintners' Song

The Company possesses a beautifully bound and illuminated volume of Sir Samuel Dashwood's *Triumph*, published in 1702. It was compiled by Elkanah Settle (1648–1724), the city's official poet, who had been responsible for writing the triumphs for the Lord Mayors since 1691. Each of these had a separate official publication.¹ The Vintners' volume for 1702 opens with a congratulatory address to Sir Samuel on his election, followed by one to the Company in praise of wine. Both are signed by Settle, who then went on to give the order of the procession for the Mayor and his Company and a description of the pageants. The volume continues with a brief account of the Guildhall banquet, where Queen Anne was seated under 'a lofty Imperial canopy of State within a Triumphal Arch, richly adorned', and ends with words of a song composed for the Vintners in honour of the occasion by Settle, the words of which are as follows:

I

Come, come let us drink the Vintners' good Health,
'Tis the Cask, not the Coffe, that holds the true Wealth:
If to Founders of Blessings we Pyramids raise,
The Bowl next the Scepter deserves the best Praise.
Then next to the QUEEN, let the Vintners' Fame shine:
She gives us good Laws, and they fill us good Wine.

II

Columbus and Cortez their Sails they unfurl'd,
To discover the Mines of an Indian World,

To find Beds of Gold so far they could roam:
Fools, Fools, when the Wealth of the World lay at Home.
The Grape, the true Treasure, much nearer it grew;
One Isle of Canary's worth all the Peru.

III

Let Misers in Garrets hide up their gay Store,
And heap their Rich Bags to live wretchedly Poor.
'Tis the Cellar alone with true Fame is renown'd,
Her Treasure's diffusive and cheers all around:
The Gold and the Gem but the Eyes gawdy Toy;
But the Vintners rich Juice gives Health, Life and Joy.

The Vintners still sing the Song with only one minor alteration. The first two lines are repeated as a chorus after each verse. The music to which words are now set was composed for the Company by Charles Marshall in 1908.²

Notes to Appendix I

1. *Dictionary of National Biography*: Vintners MS 15, 378
2. Vintners MS 15, 386

Bibliography

Abbreviations

BM	British Museum
P.R.O.	Public Record Office
E.H.R.	English Historical Review
Ec.H.R.	Economic History Review
T.R.H.S.	Transactions of the Royal Historical Society

Primary Sources

(a) Manuscript:

Records of the Vintners' Company: Until 1974 the archives of the Company remained in the muniment room at Vintners' Hall. They were catalogued by the Company's former archivist, Elizabeth Glover, B.A. In 1974 the records prior to 1900, with the exception of all the Company's charters, were transferred on permanent loan to Guildhall Library. There they were re-catalogued in accordance with the Library's system; all references beginning MS 15, — are to the Company's records at Guildhall. All other manuscript references, except where clearly identified as BM or P.R.O. material, are to Mrs. Glover's classification scheme for the Company's records.

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The Vintners' Company is one of the twelve great Livery Companies of the City of London. Its origins lie in a religious and charitable fraternity based on the church of St. Martin in the Vintry, but it soon became a mercantile society dominating the wine trade (the most important of the import trades in medieval England). By its first charter of 1364 the Vintners' Mistery was granted a monopoly control of the trade with Gascony, and extensive rights over the retail wine trade in England. The wealth resulting from this made many Vintners important figures both in City and national affairs. By 1437 the association was rich enough to secure its first grant of incorporation as a company. Already, however, its rights were being challenged, and the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries saw the Company engaged in a long defensive struggle to maintain its control over the retail trade, and to fight off the financial demands of the Crown. Like other London companies, it was forced to engage in the expensive experiment of the Londonderry Plantation in Ulster, and it suffered further from losing much of its property in the Fire of London. The eighteenth and nineteenth centuries saw the gradual recovery of the Company in financial terms, but also an increasing distance between its predominantly charitable and social activities and its concern with the trade in wine. In the twentieth century, this balance has been redressed; it now has an increasingly active role in the oversight of the wine trade, very much in the terms of its original charter.

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